

FANTASYNOPSIS

THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASTIC FILMS & VISCERAL VIDEOS

number four

£2.50

Special feature on

**DRACULA
LIFEFORCE**

Exclusive interviews

**DAVID MCGILLIVRAY
DARIO ARGENTO
BOBBIE BRESKE
ALEX GORDON**

**REVIEWS GALORE
FICTION
COMPETITIONS
& MORE...**



FANTASYNOOPSIS

number four

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This issue is dedicated to Ralph Bates, Coral Browne, Gene Roddenberry & Milton Subotsky.

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Editorial

Another Year, another issue! Apologies to you, the reader, for having to wait so long for #4 - I had always planned to get this issue ready for printing a lot earlier and set myself a target date, but as most zine editors will tell you, reaching deadlines in this game is an almost impossible task and subsequently my planned publishing date shot past at an alarming rate. So, I decided to forget dates and concentrate on the content and quality and what you have in front of you is what I rate as our most interesting issue to date. Yep, FANTASYNOOPSIS #4 right before your very eyes, colour cover and all! Sorry about the hefty price increase, but this was unavoidable with the added colour - although I have managed to include a free poster as compensation! We have a feature on the usually forgotten '79 version of DRACULA and a look at Tobe Hooper's much trashed LIFEFORCE; exclusive interviews with David McGillivray, Dario Argento, Bobbie Bresee and Alex Gordon; plus all our regular features (with the exception of TV CLASSICS, this dept. has not vanished forever though!). I hope you all find something of interest and don't forget to send your comments, good or bad, to The Chowder Society. One of the joys of publishing a zine is the feedback you get from your readers and I must say how thrilled I was to discover that some of you had decided to register a vote for FANTASYNOOPSIS in Samtains' SAMPOLL for 1990, bringing us out on top as Best Fanzine! A big thank you to all who voted and I hope that this issue is as well received as the last?

In past editorials I've waged a mini-war against censorship, so as something of a change I'd like to tell you about a recent discovery of mine that allows you to view a huge selection of genre films and a lot of them uncut too - I'm talking about satellite television! I know a lot of you are already satellite owners and that I'm a little late in joining in with all the lun, but for those of you who have yet to sample the delights of TV from space I urge you to save your pennies and splash out on a relatively cheap receiver and dish. Just recently I have had the pleasure of seeing the full versions of PET SEMATARY, A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET IV (complete with two nunchaku scenes that had previously eluded me!), EXORCIST II; THE HERETIC, Franco's THE BLOODY JUDGE, ENTER THE DRAGON and more!!! Horror plays a big part of satellite programming and hardly a day goes by when there isn't a treat for people like us. There is also a wealth of fantasy related TV programmes on show plus the mindless ultra-violence that comes from the hugely entertaining WWF wrestling shows! Forget that limp-dicked "sport" you used to see on Saturday afternoons as a kid, this stuff is just amazing!

Anyway, enough of this and back to the mag. It was sad news indeed to hear of the death of veteran genre personality, Milton Subotsky at the age of 70. Whenever I think of my horror roots, two film companies automatically spring to mind, Hammer (naturally) and, of course, Amicus, with those marvellous anthology excursions like DR. TERROR'S HOUSE OF HORRORS, THE HOUSE THAT DRIPPED BLOOD and TALES FROM THE CRYPT, etc. In the past Amicus productions have been treated as second-rate features and not judged on their own merits, but thankfully, their importance has been recognised more recently and Subotsky given the kind of credits he so richly deserved. The news of his death was even more upsetting for me as an interview had been planned for a future issue of FANTASYNOOPSIS... Sadly, we will never know?

So, until we meet again in the pages of #5, I bid you a fond farewell...

Paul

Paul J. Brown - Editor
November 1991

**THE WEREWOLVES
ARE COMING TO
FANTASYNOOPSIS #5!!**



Spill your guts to:
The Chowder Society,
1 Bascraft Way,
Godmanchester,
Huntingdon, Cambs,
PE18 8EG, England.

Dear Paul Brown

My thanks to you for FANTASYNOPSIS #3 which pleased me greatly for a number of reasons, and I'm glad to see the interview so well-illustrated. It's also refreshing to note that some truly wretched films get objectionable reviews in your pages. As I'm sure you're aware, not all genre magazines play fair with their readers in this respect. But separating the well-done efforts from the sleaze is to be commended, at a time when so many are content to take the sleazy way out.

All the best to you.

ROBERT BLOCH, LOS ANGELES, USA.

I'm honoured!
Ed.

Hi Paul

I spent a long train journey to and from Preston the other day in the company of FANTASYNOPSIS #3. Thanks for helping to make the journey pass reasonably quickly and I hope you will put up with some random reflections on your 'zine. First, the look of the whole 'zine is greatly enhanced by the A4 format and I'm personally willing to risk eye-strain from the small print as it means that so much is packed between the covers.

I notice that you have now sub-titled your 'zine, 'The Magazine Of Fantastic Films & Visceral Videos'. I'm glad that the 'viscera' you are considering in this issue centres mainly around the 'inner feelings' definition of 'viscera' rather than that which reflects the blood and guts definition which tended to dominate the zombie issue. You couldn't have picked on three better examples in MANHUNTER, TWIN PEAKS and DON'T LOOK NOW to demonstrate how films don't have to nip your throat out in order to reach those 'inner feelings'. And yet all are entirely different. Of the three, MANHUNTER is the one which I will return to time and time again knowing that familiar scenes will still have the power to make those shivers shoot up my spine. Mark Murton identifies the scene where the blind Rebe is allowed to stroke the passive tiger (I'm amazed when I mention this to others who have seen the film and they are unable to recall it), but equally as powerful is the moment when Will Graham suddenly realises that the murderer must have gained his knowledge of his victims through actually watching them on their home movies at the developing lab. No matter that the last part of the film then tends to fall away (the Keystone Kop routine as they arrive at Dolanhyde's house is particularly grating).

Whilst Mark's review neatly describes the power of the film, it is the 'Monthly Film Bulletin'-type synopsis which I feel hardly does it justice. Certainly it is accurate but a mere description of events seems to have little value for a film based so much upon psychological and emotional impact. This is also shown up by the almost hopelessly involved attempt to describe the storyline of TWIN PEAKS in the 'TV CLASSICS' feature. Would a non-viewer really have any idea from this description what on earth was going on? And wasn't it rather wasted on those of us who are avid followers? This is probably just me nit-picking: I

enjoyed Mark's article and it added a lot of background information about TWIN PEAKS which was fascinating.

The centre-piece of this issue of FANTASYNOPSIS is the article on DON'T LOOK NOW which I'm ashamed to say I haven't given a second look at since I first saw it upon its cinema release seventeen years ago. Having said that I guess that there are some films which, having been seen once, always stay lurking in the back of the mind and are never forgotten. The shock (no, make that SHOCK) ending is a particularly vivid memory, as is that of the eroticism of the love scene. Mark also makes a valid point about Roeg's use of the colour red, and we shouldn't forget that almost a decade earlier he was making his first significant moves within the movie business as a photographer on Corman's (original and best) THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH: this colour obviously held a special significance for him.

The least said about the awful 'STILL LIFE' short story the better, I think.

Finally, just to say that the video reviews section includes a welcome smattering of oldies amongst the new releases (TWISTED NERVE was one of the first X-rated movies I ever saw back in the late sixties) and, following Nigel Burrell's recommendation, I'm going to give SCARECROWS a spin once I've wound up this letter.

GLYN WILLIAMS, MICKLEOVER, DERBY.

Point taken about the MANHUNTER synopsis, Glyn, but getting into the "psychological and emotional" aspects would have taken us full circle back to the source novel (and probably have taken as many pages!) which I hope my review will have encouraged fans of the film, who haven't already done so, to seek out for themselves.

As for the 'hopelessly involved attempt to describe the storyline of TWIN PEAKS', it wasn't meant to be a serious attempt at one (hence it wasn't under a separate 'Synopsis' heading), just a bit of fun inspired by the show's offbeat humour but which, as you suggest, could only serve to irritate non-viewers and avid followers alike (twin plagues?). Lastly I urge you to give DON'T LOOK NOW that "second look" - I don't think you'll be disappointed.

Assistant Ed.

Dear Paul

Many thanks for #3 of FANTASYNOPSIS - I've never been too keen on the A5 format for magazines, so was pleased to see that you've moved to A4. Once again you managed a nice mix of various aspects of horror/fantasy, and Mark Murton's DON'T LOOK NOW piece was a sheer delight to read. I'm already a huge fan of this film, though Mark managed to highlight many subtle and symbolic touches that I had missed. I think some of the ideas Mark presents may be purely coincidence, but the article was nonetheless interesting for that. Anyway, thanks again for FANTASYNOPSIS #3.

STEVEN DUNN, BURNISTON, SGARBOROUGH.

Glad you enjoyed the DON'T LOOK NOW feature, Steve, but you can't go saying "some of the ideas may be purely coincidence" and then not give any examples! You could be right of course - in his book 'Adventures in the Screentrade', William Goldman tells how a French journalist came up with an elaborate theory explaining the significance of the numbers and letters on a number plate in Hitchcock's FAMILY PLOT only to be told by the film's scriptwriter that he used that number plate because it was his own so he thought it would be legally safe to do

so! - but if we accept the film's theme of pre-destiny then there's no such thing as coincidence (although 'Nothing is what it seems').

Assistant Ed.

Dear Paul

I was surprised and delighted to receive the issue of FANTASYNOPSIS. I am totally amazed at how good it is! As an older fan, going back to the 1960's, I can remember it as a period that had hardly ANY fanzines of horror/sf fandom. There were a couple here or there, but really nothing to brag about. In the last few years, all of that has changed. There is little doubt that the British are producing the best fanzines (or semi-prozines if you will) in the world. The American editors have fallen into the lazy "review zine" trap, which requires little more than watching a video then writing a review on it. No research articles, digging, getting interviews and all those bits and pieces of background info that make for a fascinating read. Nope... just review, review, review... Groan. It is hard to say what I liked best about your 'zine. You did have a first - a letter of comment by Gary Dorst, one of my closest friends in the world. He was one of Forry Ackerman's original fans and contacts, and wrote often for the better American fanzines (including a huge Dracula article in LSoH #4 in 1978). But with two children growing up, and getting older (like me) he has literally stopped most correspondence.

I doubt if you had chance to read it, but I had a lengthy Robert Bloch interview in LSoH #2 (1973) in which I talked in main about his work for Amicus. Quite good. Since those issues are so little read and I've had so much interest in them, I'm working with Fantaco about publishing a "BEST OF LSoH" in a softbound edition, which would include parts of the Amicus feature in #2 (which also had long interviews with Milton Subotsky and Freddie Francis). Bloch is a wonderfully friendly fellow. And some writer! Great interview with Ed Naha. I remember him best for his Roger Corman book, but I'm always thrilled when a fan "makes it". However, being a fan doesn't guarantee that one is competent. Naha is, though.

It is tough publishing a 'zine; The time involved putting it together; wheeling free contributions out of people; putting together money for the printing, advertising, shipping. And once you get a family, boy it all seems impossible. That is why I've put out only 11 issues in 18 years. But I have high hopes for a #12 in 1991. We already have Steve Karchin painting a colour cover based on THE DEVIL RIDES OUT. Hope to hold the page count around 80-100 pages with more photos this time around. Also, a tribute to Sir James Carreras, former head of Hammer Films; the making of THE DEVIL RIDES OUT and TO THE DEVIL... A DAUGHTER; Les Bowie and the SPFX of Hammer; the girls of Hammer - interviews with some of the Hammer honies; and lots of other good interviews.

Again, thanks for the issue. Great read.

DICK KLEMENSEN, IOWA, USA.

When I get a letter like this it makes all the hard work of publishing FANTASYNOPSIS seem worthwhile. I appreciate your comments Dick, I know where you're coming from!

For all you uninitiated out there - make sure you track down Dick's essential LITTLE SHOPPE OF HORRORS and I can't wait for that promised 'Best of...' compendium!

Ed.

Dear Paul

Issue #3 of FANTASYNOPSIS was a good-lookin' mag! Nice to see that you like HARDWARE, a lot of folks don't seem to rate it much. As with you, I'd already seen it when it was screened at 'Shock Around The Clock 4' but I actually enjoyed it more the second time around. The 'Dinosaurs Attack!' article was a nice idea; those cards are really nicely painted.

It was good to see a review of SCARECROWS, which is a pretty underrated pic. You also reviewed SCORPION THUNDERBOLT. The silly story, acting and dialogue is what I liked about it! Oh yeah, the awful rubbery monster was neat too! If you watch it again, do so with a few pints then maybe you'll like it (although I wouldn't hold it against you if you still didn't like it as it is shoddy to extreme!).

In the latest issue of SAMHAIN I was pleased to see that, even though I only brought out one issue last year, IMAGINATOR was voted third best fanzine in the 'Sam Poll' for '90'. Congratulations on being voted favourite fanzine for '90!

Did BJ do the illustration for the short story 'Still Life'? His

technique is much better than a lot of genre-related illustrations that I've seen.
KEN MILLER, HIGH WYCOMBE, BUCKS.

Thanks for the kind words mate. Sorry Ken, but since seeing **HARDWARE** on video a few times I have to say that it's lost all its impact and you still can't convince me with regards to **SCORPION THUNDERBOLT**!! Likewise, I was just as pleased with the 'Sam' award because, like you, I only published the one issue in '90 - it just goes to show you that it's the quality that counts, right, right, right!!? Yes, BJ did do the amazing artwork, as with this issue.
Ed.

Dear Paul
Thank you very much for **FANTASYNOPSIS** #3. I found it very interesting from the beginning to the end. I think your magazine is one of the best at present time. I liked a lot the **DON'T LOOK NOW** feature and the Reviews section. I love **DON'T LOOK NOW**, Nicolas Roeg is one of my favourite directors and Venice is my favourite city. The title of the film here in Italy is **A VENEZIA UN DICEMBRE ROSSO SHOCKING** which translates as 'A SHOCKING RED DECEMBER IN VENICE'. Every Roeg film gets the same treatment here in Italy. Some examples: **PERFORMANCE** becomes **SADISMO** which translates as 'SAOISM'; **TRACK 29** becomes **MILLE PEZZI DI UN DELIRIO** which translates as 'A THOUSAND PIECES OF A DELIRIUM'; **CASTAWAY** becomes **LA RAGAZZA VENERO** which translates as 'FRIDAY'S GIRL'; **INSIGNIFICANCE** becomes **LA SIGNORA IN BIANCO** which translates as 'THE LADY IN WHITE' (while La Loggia's **THE LADY IN WHITE** is called **SCARLATTI - THE THRILLER**?). I'm sorry but I'm not a great fan of **MANHUNTER**. I found it pretty boring and too pretentious. I found James B. Harris' **THE COP** more involving. I enjoyed reading your magazine and I'm looking forward to the next issues.
MAURIZIO BERTINO, BIELLA, ITALY.

A brilliant piece of translation-trivia. Anyone got any more?
Ed.

Dear Paul
Congratulations on issue three of **FANTASYNOPSIS**, a 56 page extravaganza of ghoulish reviews and analysis, that took me several days to wade through, well done! I've spoken to other people who've bought a copy, and they have plenty of positive praise for your hard work. Keep it up! It really makes a change to read a zine that doesn't treat its readers like teenagers with a zombie IQ. Talking of which, I must also say thanks for issues one and two, which managed to cover two of my all time personal favourites, **A CLOCKWORK ORANGE** and **DAWN OF THE DEAD**.
Now that I've softened you up with all this praise (well deserved of course!), I wonder if I may also take the liberty of asking the following question: Are there any other **FANTASYNOPSIS** readers out there, who are making or planning to make low budget horror films, and having the same problems as I'm having in raising finance? I have a good script, I have an experienced director, cameraman and other technical crew, all willing to work for expenses only, and yet trying to scrape the budget together is proving a real nightmare. Our budget for this thirty minute 16mm film project is twenty grand, and for those of you with film experience, you'll know that we are working on a tight schedule. The story is chilling rather than gory, and we are hoping to sell it to television, and of course enter it in various film festivals around the world. My aim is to make another two shorts after this one, and hopefully use the profits from all three to start on a feature. Ambitious, huh?

Is there anybody but there with any useful suggestions? Or better still, any spare capital?
Paul, I hope you don't mind me hi-jacking your platform to make my sales pitch, but I'd like to think that apart from reviewing and applauding films from the past, **FANTASYNOPSIS** would take a lead and encourage future film-makers. You'd be surprised how many of us are out there, just waiting for a break.
Still, perhaps one day **FANTASYNOPSIS** will outsell all other genre magazines, and then I can come cap in hand to your office!

Looking forward to the next quality issue.
SIMON MEADE, HUDOERSFIELD, WEST YORKSHIRE.

I am all for encouraging our future film-makers, especially

when they show the kind of talent that Simon has. I have been lucky enough to view an 8 minute short that he made called **LEAVING HOME**, and have no qualms at all about letting him use **FANTASYNOPSIS** as a soap-box. If anyone wishes to contact Simon then please write care of our editorial address.
Ed.

Dear Paul
Good to see **FANTASYNOPSIS** continuing to improve, each issue gets more and more astonishing - you'll be pleased to hear that you got my vote as 'Best Fanzine' in John Gullidge's **SAMHAIN** poll!
One aspect of **FANTASYNOPSIS** which I enjoy most is your willingness to include retrospective reviews alongside the new releases, and I hope you intend to continue along these lines - the genre's past contains a wealth of excellent material which should be brought to the attention of modern-day fans.
I thoroughly enjoyed **FANTASYNOPSIS** #3, especially the witty Robert Bloch interview and Mark's re-appraisal of the superb **DON'T LOOK NOW**. I was fascinated to see Kieler Sutherland being pursued by a minuscule, red-cloaked psychotic figure throughout the course of **FLATLINERS** - like father, like son! The piece on the brilliant **DINOSAURS ATTACK** cards was really unusual, just the sort of thing that's keeping you ahead of your rivals in my opinion.
Thanks for listening and all the best for **FANTASYNOPSIS** in the New Year.
DARRELL BUXTON, DERBY.

Dear Paul
Thanks for sending me the second issue of your fanzine **FANTASYNOPSIS**. I enjoyed it very much.
I'm afraid that an interview is not possible, I have not talked to the press in over seven years, and they still manage to misquote me.
As for naming my Top Ten Fantasy Films, that is also an impossible task. This is only because all films are different, and I find it a hopeless job to compare them on that kind of scale. However, I am happy to tell you that I adore the original **KING KONG**, **FRANKENSTEIN**, **THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN**, **THE MUMMY**, **THE EXORCIST**, **THE 7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD**, **JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS**, 2001: **A SPACE ODYSSEY**, **DR. STRANGELOVE, A CLOCKWORK ORANGE**, Disney's **PINNOCHIO**, **MIGHTY JOE YOUNG**, the original **THIEF OF BAGDAD**, **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND** (the original version), **JAWS**, **GREMLINS**, **THE WIZARD OF OZ**...
Those are just titles literally off the top of my head. I am sure if I gave it more thought I could add many others. I appreciate all these films on many different levels, for many different reasons.
I hope that's of some use to you. Good luck with your publication.
JOHN LANDIS, CALIFORNIA, USA.
Ps. Mamoulian's **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE**, **THE HORN BLOWS AT MIDNIGHT**, Lubitch's **HEAVEN CAN WAIT**, **THE EVIL DEAD**, **RE-ANIMATOR**, **DEAD OF NIGHT**, and on and on.

Shame about the interview, but a great letter all the same!

CLASSIFIEDS

WANTED: Please can you help with the following magazines and books: **LITTLE SHOPPE OF HORRORS** No's 1,2,3,5,6; **CINEFANTASTIQUE** Vol 5 No 2, Vol 6 No 2; **DEMONIQUE** No's 1,2,3; **UNGAWA** No 1; **STARLOG** No's 89,93,167,168,169; **MAGICK THEATRE** No's 1,2,3,4,5,6,8; **THE JONN CARPENTER FILE** No 1; **DEEP RED** Premier Issue; **AMAZING FORRIES**; **THE CONSUMERS GUIDE TO CONTEMPORARY HORROR FILMS** by Chas Balun; **THE PHANTOM'S ULTIMATE VIDEO GUIDE**; **STEP RIGHT UP, I'M GONNA SCARE THE PANTS OFF AMERICA** by William Castle; **FAST & FURIOUS: THE FILMS OF A.I.P.**; **WALT LEE'S REFERENCE GUIDE TO FANTASTIC FILMS** (Vol's 1,2,3); **FAREWELL TO THE DRAGON** (Bruce Lee); **VINCENT PRICE AUTOBIOGRAPHY**.
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BLONDE AMBITION

SCREAM QUEEN BOBBIE BRESEE INTERVIEWED BY PAUL J. BROWN

In the USA the beautiful form of Bobbie Bresee had been seen on countless posters and ads for several years with such diverse products as Blue Ribbon Beer and Toyota cars, but she remained relatively unseen in this country until she was unleashed to the horror loving masses in the 1983 low budget shocker, **MAUSOLEUM**. Her award winning performance endeared her to the fans and ever since then she has been in almost constant touch with the genre and her talents (physical as well as thespian!) can be seen in movies like **GHOULIES** (1985), **PRISON SHIP STAR SLAMMER** (1988), **ARMED RESPONSE** (1986), **SURF NAZIS MUST DIE** (1987), **METAMORPHOSIS** (aka 'Evil Spawn') (1988) and **SOCIAL SUICIDE** (1990); a couple of American video's **DRIVE IN MADNESS: THE VIDEO** (based on the book by Bill George), and **MY LOVELY MONSTER**, a docudrama surrounding Forrest J. Ackerman; countless TV shows like **CHARLIE'S ANGELS**, **THE FALL GUY**, **WONDER WOMAN**, **MIAMI VICE**, **MIKE HAMMER**, etc; appearing on stage in productions like 'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM' and 'TRIBUTE'; as well as gracing the covers of books, 'Drive In Madness - The Jiggle Movies' and 'Famous Monster Of Film Land', genre publications like 'SF Movie Land' and featuring in the nude in 'Playboy' (July 1989 issue for those of you wishing to check it out!). As if this wasn't enough to keep most women busy, Bobbie also finds the time to develop board-games (mostly adult!) with her TV/radio presenter husband! This interview was conducted way back in May 1990 and I found the delightful Bobbie very friendly, intelligent and a very astute person with a keen eye for business. The movies she makes may be low-budget exploitation pics

but believe me this blonde is definitely no bimbo!

Paul J. Brown: What were you doing prior to **MAUSOLEUM**?

Bobbie Bresee: Prior to **MAUSOLEUM**... I had received a Bachelor's Degree in Music and taught for two years - went shopping in Hollywood one summer - had lunch at the Playboy Club and never left! I was a bunny for five years - had a ball... met a lot of people in show-business and was hooked!!

*How did you get involved with **MAUSOLEUM** and horror films in general and have you always been a fan of the genre?*

Horror was my favourite genre of films. I loved to be scared to death. 4-E (Forrest J. Ackerman) was the one who said to try out for **MAUSOLEUM**. They wanted a brunette (I guess they're more frightening???) and in my audition I put red contact lenses in my eyes and dug my nails into the person I was reading with - and growled (ala Mercedes McCambridge in **THE EXORCIST**) - got the part!!

Did you have any objections to wearing gruesome make-up for your first starring role?

I approached the make-up as an adventure. Never having experienced the whole process I was naive to all the consequences - yikes! The funny side was no-one would sit next to me at lunch (we are talking "really ugly" here!) and they covered the mirror so I wouldn't get depressed! It's amazing how much character you come up with after looking in a mirror.

How did you first react when you first realised that your breasts were flesh-eaters?

I wasn't on the set when the main monster was used. I did phase 1 and 2. It wasn't 'til I saw the finished version did I realise what she did with 'her breasts'. The monster is in Forry's care - hopefully going to a museum one day. Fans will be happy that her breasts are still in 'munching order'.

*Did you watch endless reels of **THE EXORCIST** to get the feel of the part or did you draw your inspirations from another source?*

I had already seen **THE EXORCIST** quite a few times. It's one of my all-time favourite films. Blair was exceptional - very believable. We belong to the same gym and I found her to be down to earth and very funny. Incidentally - she works out - has a great body.

How do you rate the finished film?

The film went through a lot of change (directors, actors). Originally cast was Burt Ward from TV **BATMAN** fame. Also the film stopped mid-section because my skin and eyes were damaged from all the prosthetics - then finished three months later. So I was thrilled that it

came together as well as it did.

*What was your reaction when you first heard that your performance in **MAUSOLEUM** had won an award, 'Best Actress' at the Paris Film Festival Of Sci-Fi and Fantasy?*

Shock... fatal shock! I have since found a wonderful coach (John Lehne) who said, after seeing **MAUSOLEUM**, I hadn't developed a three-dimensional character. My reply was "Are you kidding - I barely got the words out, let alone develop a character".

*Did you get your part in **GHOULIES** as a direct result of **MAUSOLEUM** and have you any funny stories concerning that tongue?*

John Buechler, the creator of the **MAUSOLEUM** monster, suggested me for the **GHOULIES** part. I've never been able to live down my four-foot tongue. 'Course the whole crew didn't let one joke go by. I thought I handled the "ribbing" quite nicely.

*What was it like working on a Troma set and a film like the wonderfully titled **SURF NAZIS MUST DIE**?*

Peter George, producer and director of **SURF NAZIS MUST DIE**, was a USC film graduate - this was his first film, with his own money. If you know how difficult it is to get something like this accomplished (produce a film) then he gets four stars for this first attempt.

The fantasy/horror genre has been kind to you, will you endeavour to do all you can to get away from it or will you honour your roots and stay with it?

They have definitely been kind to me and I'll never leave sight of that. I've finished a comedy and will be doing a James Bond type next but I bought a script called **13TH ROOM** - a good up-scale vampire project which I intend to do in 1991 - just to keep my hands in horror!

*You have worked with two generations of the Carradine family, John in **METAMORPHOSIS** and David in **ARMED RESPONSE**, how did they compare to each other and what were they like to work with?*

John Carradine was sexy! Can you imagine, during an interview I leaned in and he looked down my blouse and smiled. I looked at him quite differently after that. He was chain-smoking the whole time. I'm sure that probably added to his health problems. David on the other hand seems to be very low keyed - doesn't smile much and loves his beer! Just caught **BIRD ON A WIRE** and he plays a great heavy.



BOBBIE BRESEE



Bobbie with the "sexy" John Carradine



Strike the pose!

When looking for work what do you look for in a script?

You can't predict a hit film - but if you don't have a good story you can bet your bottom dollar it won't be a good movie. "The play's the thing" - wish I had said that.

I've often read and seen photographs of your link with Forrest J. Ackerman, in your opinion how important is he to the world of fandom?

Forrest J. is probably the "Father of Sci-Fland Horror". He has enhanced the lives of almost everyone in the genre. He has been a dear friend for over fifteen years - we try to do a lot of projects together.

I have heard that you had bad experiences working for Fred Olen Ray, was this the main reason that you formed your own production company with your husband?

Interesting that you picked up on that. Actually we were so disappointed in the way Fred Olen Ray put the video (METAMORPHOSIS) together - we had to go to court to get control so we could put out a better product. Fred cuts a lot of corners and it shows. The 'ole saying "you get what you pay for" also pertains in movie making. The version in the States is the one Fred put out - I'm still embarrassed about that. England got the revised edition. Our production company will do 13TH ROOM, but presently my husband is producing a game show called "Key Word" which will be distributed world-wide.

What's the story behind your board-game business and how successful is it?

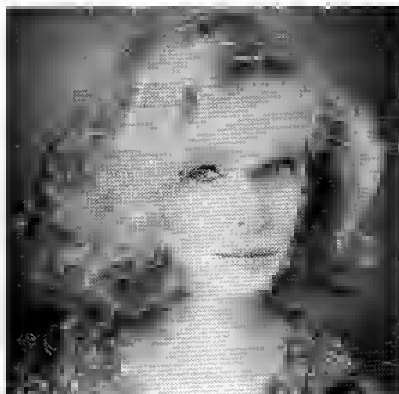
"Pass Out" (an adult drinking game. Ed.) has been a successful board-game in the States for over twenty-five years. Frank (her husband) has fifteen board games on the market. As a matter of fact "Games Trade Monthly" of England reported that "Pass Out" was the #1 most popular board-game in all of the United Kingdom. It is currently sold in most big stores including the 'adult games department' of Harrods.

How do you feel about featured as a pin-up in the 'Scream Queen' trading card set?

Again these are my roots - you can't bite the hand that feeds you. I'm excited about the comedy I just finished but I'll always keep my fans happy with yearly doses of horror. Besides, Bob Michelucci, creator of the cards, did a first rate job as always.

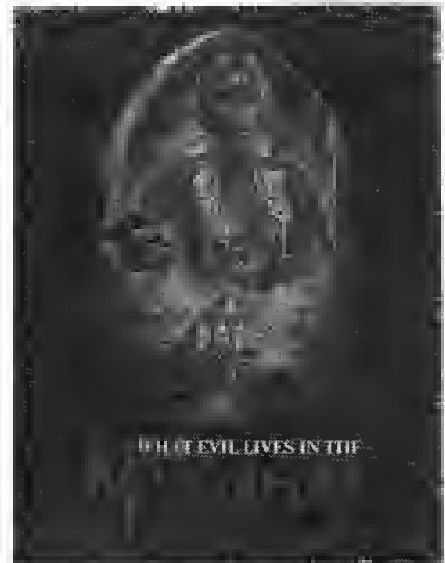
From watching most of your films, it is plainly obvious that you are not a shy lady. Do you feel that all of your nude scenes are totally necessary for the plot or simply included to attract a young male audience?

There are no two ways about it - nude scenes have nothing to do with the plot - it's upsetting, exploitive and de-meaning. You have two choices - work or not!!! There are two-hundred girls waiting in the wings who are younger, better looking and willing to take over in a second. Since realising this inevitable dilemma I have found a coach, John Lehne from the Strasberg School in New York, to help me become a good actress. I had the "cart before the horse", I got work before I was ready. Luckily I'm working to repair that damage. I plan to stay a life-time in this business and there's only one way to do it... study!



What would you say to women who say that you are being exploited by film-makers?

Tough question! There are more people and less jobs. The union (SAG) says that we have 65% unemployment. Nice odds wouldn't you say? So when a project comes up - give it a lot of thought and weigh up the options. My strategy now is wait for the good projects and not work in-between. It could be a long wait but if you can afford it, that's the best road to take.



Front cover of the MAUSOLEUM campaign book
Are you opposed to film censorship and what bodies like the MPAA and the BBFC are trying to do?

I experienced English censorship first hand, they clipped a good fifteen seconds of blood from METAMORPHOSIS. I've never quite understood this - it's a movie, it's pretend, it's not real, besides, you don't have to watch it! Most should understand that. Evidently, there's a few that don't!

Of all your films which is your personal favourite and why?

Working title is MALIBU HIGH II (I'm sure this is now called SOCIAL SUICIDE. Ed.) - my last film. Only because for the first time I knew what I was doing. I'm proud of my work - I couldn't say that before. We're taking it to the Milan Film Festival in October (remember this was 1990. Ed). Hopefully I can take a side trip to England to see how the board-games are doing.

What does the future hold for Bobbie Bresee in terms of films, etc?

I was to begin a James Bond type thriller in June entitled A FINAL KILL but its been postponed to September of



The two faces of Bobbie from MAUSOLEUM

1990. My character gets turned on by her lover's gun, sounds promising. 13TH ROOM will probably be produced early 1991 - a female Frank Langella in DRACULA. One thing good about horror films - you can grow old and ugly and no-one will notice.

Thank you Bobbie for talking to FANTASYNOPSIS and I wish you all the best for the future.

.....

Sincere thanks to Bobbie and Forrest J. Ackerman for making this interview possible.

FAVOURITE FANTASY FILMS OF.. BOBBIE BRISLEE

1. WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE? (1962)

"Two of my favourite actresses! Bette Davis and Joan Crawford were having a feud during the making of this picture in 1962 - which made their performances stand out even more. The fighting continued on the set... talk about "real" performances."

2. SOYLENT GREEN (1973)

"This was Edward G. Robinson's last film. It seems strange that it should be such a futuristic plot. The ironic situation is that this movie was made in 1973... and it's slowly coming to pass. God forbid it should all come true. That's what's so scary - it's so real!"

3. GOLDFINGER (1964)

"My favourite James Bond film. Sean Connery was at his best - the story was sensational - Oddjob was my favourite villain; and Pussy Galore holding down the women's movement - who could ask for anything more!!!"

4. THE EXORCIST (1973)

"The most frightening movie I've ever seen. I had nightmares for weeks! Never again ate "pea soup". It wasn't until I met Linda Blair years later did I realise she was a nice, normal, everyday gal!!! Who knew!!?"

5. CARRIE (1976)

"Brian De Palma is one of my favourites. He has a knack of setting up suspense. He catches you when you're not looking. I still jump out of my seat when the "hand" comes out of the grave. Nothing is really dead - is it!!?"

6. DRESSED TO KILL (1980)

"Intriguing plot with lots of twists and Michael Caine is kind of cute as a woman. Michael was wonderful - you didn't suspect him at all. In shooting out of sequence it's hard to keep all those facts straight. Michael's made a lot of movies he's used to it. One of Ang's great orgasmic scenes!"

7. VIDEO DROME (1982)

"Of course, my other favourite director David Cronenberg. expect the unexpected! Of course the fabulous special effects really enhanced this film - but James Woods was just starting to get media attention - of course the rest is history... Woods has been putting in remarkable performances ever since."

8. E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (1982)

"It's nice to go to the movies to be entertained but a double bonus when you can cry. Spielberg created an ugly monster you could really care about. It's a "feel good" movie. The kind that lasts in your memory for ever."

9. THE FLY (1986)

"Cronenberg, again with the right touch of Chris Welas. What made this so real to me was Jeff Goldblum took on the characteristics of a fly... the movements of the eyes, etc. Jeff took this part seriously and I admire him for that."

10. DEAD RINGERS (1988)

"Do you get the impression I'm in love with Cronenberg? Some people cannot handle his "way out" stories... I call him very creative - off-beat perhaps! Instruments for mutant women - now that's different. Jeremy Irons should have been nominated for an Oscar - his performance was incredible - and what's more he did it twice!"

Bobbie Brislee

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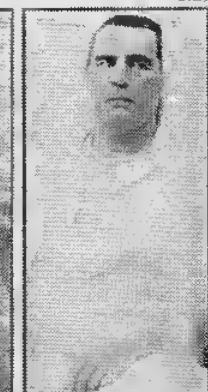


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UNDER THE COVERS

By Ray Stewart, Editor of
Magazines Of The Movies

NOT SUCH A FAMOUS REVIVAL

Back in 1958 the horror movie scene was set alight by the arrival of a new, innovative and original magazine called FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND. Its editor, the now legendary Forrest J. Ackerman, used to get 500 letters a month as he nurtured a generation of horror fans with a diet of Frankenstein, fearsome photos, facts and pun-filled fun. It ran for 191 issues, plus several Yearbooks, before it ended in 1982.

Two years later Forry was back with MONSTERLAND but his association with the magazine lasted only a few issues.

Now, six years on, Ackerman has returned with his new quarterly MONSTERAMA.

That's the big build up over. It's downhill from here I'm afraid. I'll be the first to admit that advance news of MONSTERAMA filled me full of expectation. I couldn't wait. The fact that my regular magazine store hadn't kept me a copy and I had to wait for the second batch to arrive heightened the suspense.

The big day arrived. There it was. Karloff, Lugosi, Chaney and The Wolf Man on the cover. A collector's classic?

Maybe so, but for me it was a classic disappointment. Perhaps I was expecting too much. At worst I was prepared for a few reruns from those early FAMOUS MONSTERS but not a complete magazine of them. True, Forry updates the captions to the photos which are, in fact, different to those used in the original articles (with a few exceptions) and the Frankenstein feature starts "Life begins at 175" as compared to FM #1 and "Life begins at 140".

OK. So I'm lucky to have FM #1 to make the comparison but the big question remains "Is MONSTERAMA what the film magazine readers of 1991 really want?"

When FAMOUS MONSTERS began Elvis had a number one hit with 'Jailhouse Rock' and Michael Holliday topped the UK chart with 'The Story Of My Life'. Horror movies as we know them today hadn't been thought of or indeed contemplated. Splatter movies was a term unknown. The age of innocence into which FAMOUS MONSTERS was born has long since gone. Horror fans of today relate to Freddy not Frankenstein, Darkman not Dracula and to the young generation of film watchers most of the old 'scary' movies are just something which appear on television at unearthly hours of the morning and which don't merit wasting space on a video tape.

I enjoy Ackerman's contributions to FILMFAX magazine and was expecting some articles along those lines in his new magazine. Unfortunately, that is not the case and I'm sorry to be negative about the work of someone I respect and admire. I know many will love MONSTERAMA and as a collector I will continue to buy his work. But FAMOUS MONSTERS will always be special and back-tracking in this particular case does nothing but devalue that which has gone before. I sincerely wish MONSTERAMA well but isn't it always the case that "... all things that rise from the grave meet a sticky end"?

Right, so what else is new in the magazine world.

At time of writing there seems to be a glut of Dario Argento material on the way. Pierre Jouis, from France, plans a double issue of his magazine FANTASY FILM MEMOIRY (#4/5) on the horror maestro. Harald Dolezal is producing a 110 sided Argento special for his German language DARK MOVIES fanzine which is published in Austria, and, of course, there's the book BROKEN MIRRORS, BROKEN MINDS by Maitland McDonagh (There's also some Italian PROFONDO ROSSO publications. Ed.).

For those who wrote requesting a list of magazines which have featured Argento here's some to be going on with. The following features deal mainly with the man and his movies, not film reviews: 1978 - HALLS OF HORROR #23; 1982 - CINEMA #5; 1983 - STARBURST #61; 1984 - HALLS OF HORROR #27, FANGORIA #34 & #35; 1985 - BLOODY BEST OF FANGORIA #4; 1986 - FANGORIA #53; 1987 - FANGORIA #66, DEEP RED #1; 1988 - FANGORIA #74, SAMHAIN #7 & #8; 1989 - HORROR FAN #4, THE JOHN CARPENTER FILE #9; 1990 - GOREZONE #14, FANGORIA #95, CINEFANTASTIQUE Vol 21 #3, SAMHAIN #23, STARBURST #146, FILM REVIEW Nov, THE DARKSIDE #3, IT'S ONLY A MOVIE! #1.

It's good to welcome back DEEP RED in a larger (and more expensive) format, the 132 page issue number seven will set you back almost a tenner (this giant issue also features Argento. Ed.).

Since my last column, TOXIC HORROR has, not unexpectedly, bitten the dust. FANGORIA and the now quarterly GOREZONE were just too similar for it to succeed out of the Starlog Communications stable. SKELETON CREW is also no more.

Elsewhere in the film magazine world IDOLS ended a 38 issue run in March and after an astonishing life span of almost 60 years MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN is now part of the new-look monthly SIGHT AND SOUND. Check out SIGHT AND SOUND for complete cast and credits to every film, including horror and fantasy, which receives a London release.

A reader writes requesting information about a magazine called MONSTERS TO LAUGH WITH. This American mag hit the newsstands in 1964 and ran for three issues before becoming MONSTERS UNLIMITED the following year. Actually, this is a curious little publication which seemed to be aimed at those who found comics too difficult to understand! Each page comprises one picture and 'amusing' caption from the pen of Stan Lee. For instance, the Creature from the Black Lagoon emerging from the water saying "I'm not coming out till you close your eyes". That was one of the better ones, believe me! MONSTERS UNLIMITED went on to publish a total of four issues.

The over exposed world of STAR TREK THE NEXT GENERATION now has a new UK publication — a series of poster mags from the STARBURST publishers, Visual Imagination Ltd. The first issue went on sale in May and the mag has a monthly schedule. With two episode guides and one character profile per mag this one could go on and on and on... but somehow I don't think so. Yawn.

Must say I was impressed that FANTASY SYNOPSIS #3 had an article on TWIN PEAKS. The magazine was published just as the series aired on BBC2. Good work Paul and Mark (95% Mark on that one. Ed.). Must admit

I'm a big fan of the series and I was surprised that film mags did not give it more coverage. TV ZONE featured TWIN PEAKS in its June issue (#19) and also on its cover. This, mark my words, will be one of the most collectable film magazines of 1991. I spent hours looking for it in the shops but they were all sold out. Surely someone, somewhere must put together a TWIN PEAKS Fantasy Female Special. Wow! What stunning, fascinating and talented girls.

For the record, TWIN PEAKS articles of 1991 to date (end of June) have appeared in EMPIRE in January and April, TV HITS in January and March, STARBURST #149, YOUNG AMERICANS #13, plus a short piece in SAMHAIN #27 on the Broadcasting Standards Council ruling on one of the more violent episodes — the Bob/Leland murder of Laura's cousin Maddie. (A mention must also be given for the magnificent cover feature in VIDEO WATCHDOG #2, which, incidentally, is now out of print. Ed.)

I was delighted to receive a letter from Dick Klemensen who produces the Journal of Hammer Films, LITTLE SHOPPE OF HORRORS. There was a break of four years between issue 9 and the fantastic double issue 10/11 which went on sale last year but Dick informs me that it shouldn't be so long before we see issue 12. Chances are it will be on sale later this year. And the content... it's going to focus on the Hammer girls with the promise of lots of "tits and ass".

A couple of the established genre magazines reached milestones earlier this year. STARBURST had its 150th issue in February, without so much as a backwards glance in its pages, while FANGORIA celebrated its 100th issue in the same month with a lot more style, chronicling a decade by decade history of horror and including a host of special features.

Finally, can't go without congratulating Paul on FANTASY SYNOPSIS being voted Fanzine of the Year by SAMHAIN readers. The best is yet to come (Flattery will get you everywhere. Ed!).

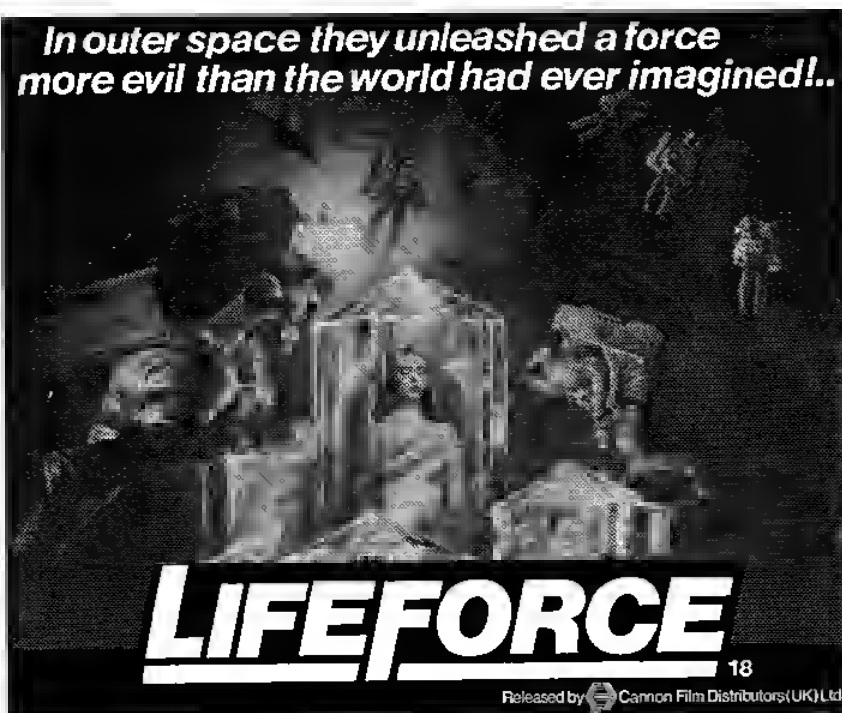
If you have found Ray's column interesting then you should get yourself acquainted with his essential MAGAZINES OF THE MOVIES - find full details in the 'Have You Zine It' section. - Ed.

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The exploration of the organic ship

Fantasynopsis looks at Tobe Hooper's **LIFEFORCE** - and we're not talking turkey!

SYNOPSIS

On a mission to study Halley's Comet the space shuttle Churchill and its crew discover a huge alien organic ship and go EVA to investigate.

On board they find the decimated remains of some strange bat-like creatures and three naked humanoids (one female and two males) in some sort of suspended animation.

Commander Carlsen orders that the 'humans' be taken aboard the Churchill and decides to abort his mission and head back towards the Earth.

Time passes and when no messages are heard back at Mission Control Great Britain a rescue ship is sent up to intercept the slumbering Churchill.

Inside the shuttle they discover the grisly remains of the crew and the still perfect forms of the guests, they also notice that the escape-pod has been launched.

The findings are taken down to London where a team of

top-scientists get to work led by the flamboyant Dr. Fallada. The mysterious female springs to life and emits a strong, almost hypnotic, sexual power, drawing one of the guards into her arms where she literally sucks him of all his 'life-force' until he drops to the floor a withered hideous skeleton. Still naked, the woman walks out among the public.

Meanwhile, the escape-pod containing Commander Carlsen arrives back on Earth. He explains what happened aboard the Churchill and confirms that these creatures are a form of 'space-vampire' who seem to take the very soul of their victims - and like the traditional vampire, once 'bitten' the victim will return to 'life' shortly afterwards to further spread the 'disease'.

Scotland Yard become involved, led by SAS Colonel Caine, and when they discover that Carlsen has been deliberately left with a telepathic link to the 'space girl' they embark on a massive search. Fallada has also discovered that a leaded pike driven through the 'energy centre' of one of the creatures will kill them. However, the girl is not to be found inside her original body as she has the ability to hide herself inside unwilling hosts.

Back in space, the huge alien vessel begins to unfold a huge web-like device and positions itself over the Earth. Meanwhile the London streets have become a virtual holocaust area with infected 'vampires' and 'zombies' roaming around in search of fresh victims - spreading the plague at an alarming rate.

NATO decide to quarantine the city and give the go-ahead to destroy the city by nuclear means unless Caine and Carlsen can find and stop the girl.

Eventually the girl draws Carlsen to her, and he finds that she is sending all the captured souls up to her ship, the two then embark on a final 'kiss'. Battling through the London scenes of devastation not far behind him is Caine. Armed with a medieval pike that was gleaned from Fallada, he tracks the intergalactic-lovers down to St. Paul's Cathedral and passes the love-locked Carlsen the makeshift weapon. The ex-astronaut summons what is left of his will power and then makes the ultimate sacrifice, sending the girl and himself into impaled oblivion.

REVIEW

"... that girl was no girl..."

Described by some as "Lifeforce" and "Plan 10 From Outer Space" and generally flushed down the pan by

most critics, I remained undeterred and went to see it because of the much publicized make-up effects shots and on the strength of Hooper's name (as well as his recommendations that "... I made this to be a big-screen movie and that's where it'll be appreciated best").

After that viewing and several more since on video, I feel that a great injustice has been done and that **LIFEFORCE** has never really been appreciated for what it is - an enjoyable sixties SF homage that is deserving of praise in the same sort of way that Ken Russell's **THE LAIR OF THE WHITE WORM** has been awarded more recently. Let's first discuss how **LIFEFORCE** first came into being: The director, Tobe Hooper, a native of Texas, first started playing around with cameras at the age of nine and completed his first picture by the time he reached sixteen with a short entitled **THE ABYSS**. He later got into the directing of TV commercials and documentaries and after joining the University Of Texas as a member of staff he completed his first full-length feature, a comedy called **EGGSHELLS**, but didn't shoot to international recognition until 1974 with the release of the most notorious horror film ever made, **THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE**, and struck himself a place in the annals of cinematic history.

After this phenomenal rise to success he continued in the horror genre with **DEATH TRAP** (1976), the magnificent TV version of Stephen King's **SALEM'S LOT** (1979), the underrated **THE FUNHOUSE** (1981), and the Spielberg produced **POLTERGEIST** (1982) before getting involved with a three picture deal with Cannon Films and Msrs. Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus. The three titles involved were a re-make of William Cameron Menzies' **INVADERS FROM MARS**, a much yearned for sequel, **THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE PART 2** but firstly an adaptation of Colin Wilson's successful novel **'SPACE VAMPIRES'** (first published in 1976).

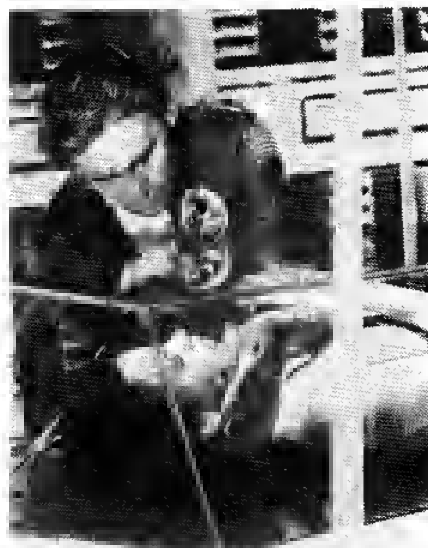
At the time, Hooper was thinking about directing **RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD** but as that production kept getting delayed he felt that it would never get off the ground and decided to look at Golan's offer of **'SPACE VAMPIRES'** which he had just acquired the rights to. Hooper then contacted Dan ALIEN O'Bannon and Don BLUE THUNDER Jakoby, and brought them on board to write the script.

The two writers spent four months adapting the 250 page tome but had to condense it considerably to avoid a six-hour running time! Hooper was quoted as saying that "... (Colin) Wilson himself sanctioned all the changes we made and seemed quite pleased with the final result. As far as I'm concerned, I think we were as faithful to the book as we could possibly be."

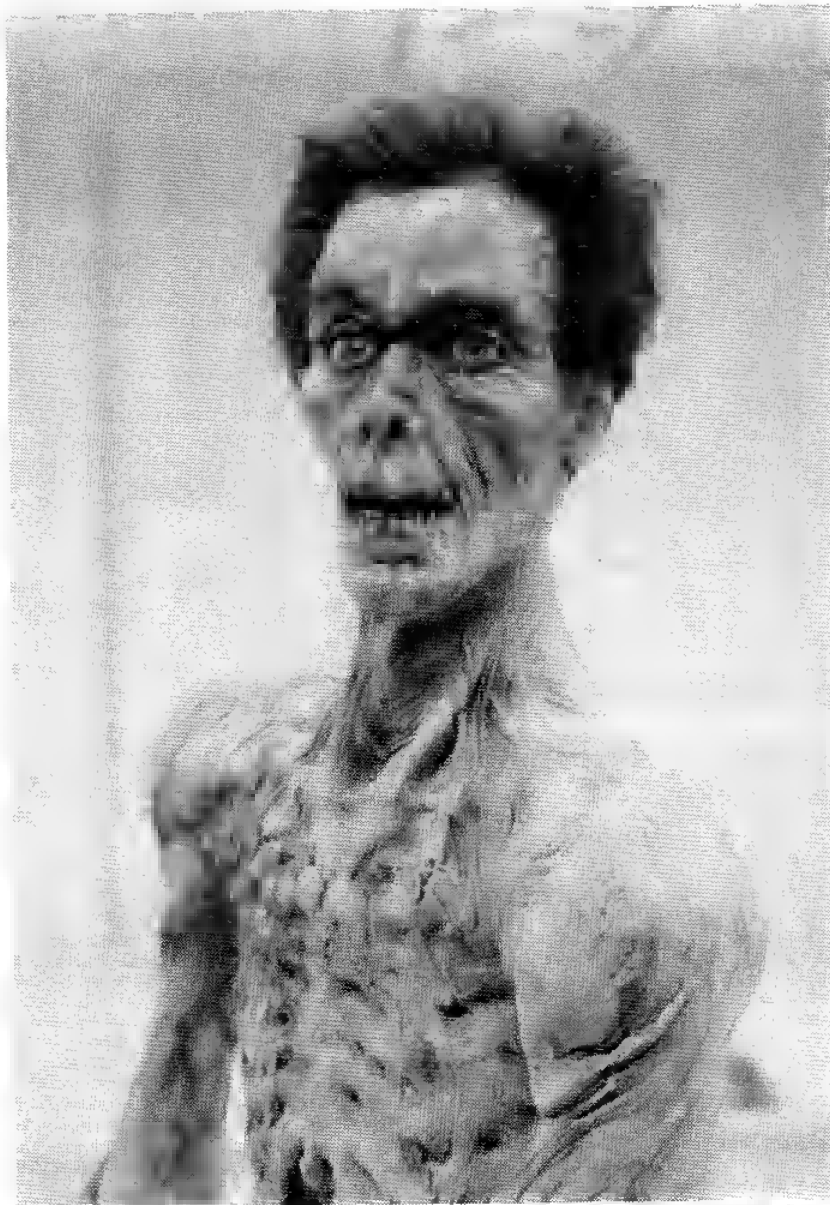
The biggest change that occurred concerned the film's title, **'SPACE VAMPIRES'**, which nobody wanted with the reasoning that it made it sound like a cheap exploitation picture (so?) and that the vampires themselves weren't blood-suckers, and it was finally changed to **LIFEFORCE** because of the way that each victim's life-force was drawn out of them.

Principal photography began on February 6th 1984 with an initial budget of \$15 million but finally coming in at around the \$25 million mark, Cannon Films biggest budgeted production ever!

The project was a mammoth task demanding at least eighty sets, including the enormous interior of the alien spacecraft, and these were built at Elstree and a few other London locations. Other magnificent sets were for the 'Churchill' shuttle, which was modelled on the real shuttle 'Columbia', and an interior of the insane asylum, which was used to show an energy-transfer sequence, and was built as an octagon-shaped room that was able to spin with a force of 1G! But, by far the largest of all the sets, and the one that came in for the harshest criticism, was an exterior that had recreated some London streets



Railsback becomes, quite understandably, infatuated with the "Space Girl"



A "walking shrivelled"

for the film's climatic battle scene. This quantity of sets was matched equally by the amazing



Frank Finlay ponders over some grisly remains

number of optical and physical effects - "There's a large optical effect or physical effect every minute or so in this picture" said Hooper.

The opticals were handled by **STAR WARS** Oscar winner John Dykstra and his Apogee company who with a budget of \$3 million delivered the goods admirably for the cornet and actual 'life-force' effects.

But, to make full use of these clever opticals they needed to be linked into one of the movie's greatest achievements, the re-animated cadavers. These marvels of technology were brilliantly realised by the Prosthetics Supervisor, Nick Maley (whose work can also be seen in **INSEMINOID**, **THE KEEP** and **KRULL**), who along with an enormous team created two articulated animatronic puppets, which needed twenty-three people to operate them, and hordes of plague-ridden zombieified victims - affectionately referred to as "walking shrivelleds"!!

LIFEFORCE is populated by British character actors all giving stiff-upper-lipped performances, with the likes of Frank Finlay, as the flamboyant, almost Dr. Who-type, Dr. Fallada, pondering and hypothesizing on the whole grisly affair in a delightfully dead-pan fashion not far removed from an **AVENGERS** or **QUATERMASS** episode and from Peter Firth, the film's biggest failure, as the SAS Colonel Caine (alas, not a patch like his interesting namesake, played by Stacy Keach, in William Peter Blatty's **THE NINTH CONFIGURATION**!!), who completely mis-handles all his lines, fails to look the part and shows no signs of being remotely interested in what

what the press said:

"Confusing, hard-to-like megabuck bomb..." - *Chas. Balun / THE DEEP RED HORROR HANDBOOK*

"Though the effects are good, this is an astonishingly boring and laughable alien invasion flick..." - *John McCarty / THE OFFICIAL SPLATTER MOVIE GUIDE*

"... an uneven but still recommended space-horror film... horrific visuals will have you shivering days later..." - *John Stanley / REVENGE OF THE CREATURE FEATURES MOVIE GUIDE*

"A blend of intriguing SF and ridiculous supernatural elements" - *John Elliot / ELIJAH'S GUIDE TO FILMS ON VIDEO*

"Director Tobe Hooper reaches into the recesses of silliness and come out the other side with one of the most interesting stories about obsessional love that I've seen for ages." - *Tom Hutchinson / PHOTOPLAY*

"Apart from a few lively shock scenes, an object lesson in failure... The effects are good; at least all the money is on the screen." - *Bill Kelley / CINEFANTASTIQUE*

"... the film just becomes embarrassing to watch..." - *Alan Jones / STARBURST*

"On one hand it's the worst big budget fantasy film of the year, but, objectivity aside, on the other it is perhaps one of the most enjoyable to come our way in a long while... for sheer turkey value the film is unmissable... Hilarious fun at break-neck speed, **LIFEFORCE** is an expensive movie that actually looks cheap." - *Philip Numan / SHOCK XPRESS*

"A far cry from Tobe Hooper's earlier macabre works, **LIFEFORCE** is banal to the point of ridicule. But I guess it may get an audience - on late night television in twenty years' time" - *Sally Hibbin / FILMS & FILMING*

"You've never seen a sci fi film like this before... It's so bad that it could become a cult film." - *Peter Haigh / FILM REVIEW*

"Special effects cannot compensate for the risibility of much of the dialogue, the mugging of Steve Railsback and Peter Firth, or the script's unfortunate habit of interjecting lengthy explanations into the unlikeliest and most awkward of places." - *Julian Petley / MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN*

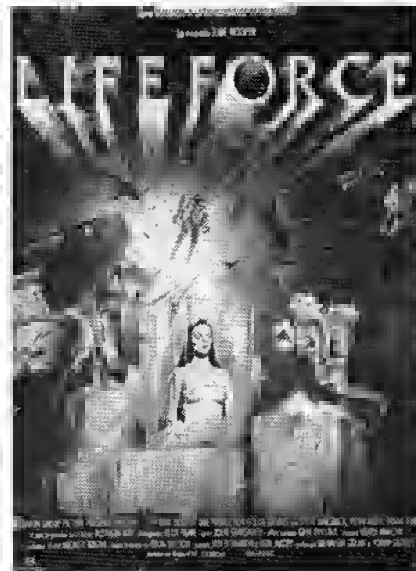
"OK, OK. This cheesy little science-fiction/horror/exploitation/romance flick (directed by Tobe Hooper) is strangely enjoyable. It may not have intentionally been played for laughs, but it's really quite an entertaining romp. **LIFEFORCE** combines aspects of **ALIEN**, **WAR OF THE WORLDS** and **A MAN AND A WOMAN**, and doesn't make out too badly... **LIFEFORCE** proves once again that a bunch of marketable concepts thrown haphazardly together with a sprinkling of naked bodies can add up to big fun for your entertainment dollar." - *John H. Sayers / STARLOG PRESENTS SCIENCE FICTION VIDEO MAGAZINE*

he is doing - writer Don Jakoby stated that the part of Caine was originally intended for Anthony Hopkins or someone of his age and personality and said that "... he's (Firth) not Anthony Hopkins... he gives the film a cold tone where a warm tone was needed..."

The lead role, however, was played by the film's only American, Steve Railsback, who had risen to critical acclaim for his performance as Charles Manson in **HELTER SKELTER**, as the Space Commander Tom Carlsen. Railsback had been a friend of Hooper's for over ten years prior to **LIFEFORCE** but they never had the opportunity to work together and he jumped at the chance after reading the script. Although Railsback is not entirely convincing he does portray a good 'victim' and is a decent platform from which to focus the story. In keeping with the sixties feel I rather enjoyed the idea of a token American actor to please the US audiences, as Hammer did in their



Just your average day on London's underground!



to give it a 4-star/must see' rating even though his publication's reviewer had pronounced it as 'mediocre' and that even the likes of the usually obnoxious Stefan Jaworzyn gave it 3-stars in a 1-5 rating system in the pages of the sorely missed 'Shock Xpress'!

The concept of tying in the film's release with the actual return to Earth's atmosphere of Halley's Comet was an inspired and clever move for which credit must be given, but sadly it failed to ignite audience responses in the way that had been planned. It could have had something to do with the old story, hinted at by the newsreader in the film, that comets are considered harbingers of evil and that a plague had already descended down to Earth for real with the television-public discovery of the AIDS virus and that nothing on screen could match up to the devastation of that!

Having already mentioned a certain resemblance to a QUATERMASS episode, this brings to mind LIFEFORCE's nearest comparison, Hammer's QUATERMASS AND THE PIT - the whole synopsis could have been taken from any of the QUATERMASS movies - we have a threat to the Earth by a powerful alien race, the breakdown of law and order, etc., it has just been updated for the eighties with gore, nudity and technology. But examples of movie-mimicry are most evident from PIT where we have scenes of fire-ridden London, the underground stations, St. Paul's Cathedral and good old English soldiers taking charge of the situation without a clue as to what's going on around them. Then there's the TV QUATERMASS CONCLUSION link with more public unrest and even a powerful shaft of light surging up to the heavens!

It's these sixties ideas, when combined with the excellent pacing, amazing effects and rousing Henry Mancini score that allow you to enjoy the film on a not-too-serious level and that some of the dead-pan dialogue becomes bearable and amusing. I, for one, didn't even notice, as 'Starburst' pointed out, that there are some glaring scientific errors "... like the alien spaceship assuming geo-stationary orbit over London, a possible geo-stationary orbit that doesn't really exist, and the Shuttle Captain's journey to Earth in an escape pod that takes longer to fall out of orbit than it takes to send up a second shuttle, find the gutted ship, unload it, get back home and then examine and allow the vampires to escape... when Carlsen does eventually arrive, he is not even wearing a space-suit - so in a pod the size of an ill-equipped toilet, he must have been breathing very shallowly!" - Who actually gives a fuck? Give me a break guys! Hooper never intended to bring us science-fact, just a plain old-fashioned ripping-yarn that the average horror/SF fan could get off on. In all honesty, how many of you out there actually noticed?

So, with these errors and the holey plot, what else has it got to offer - an interesting up-dating of the tried and tested vampire legend, that's what! These vampires are truly soulless creatures and bear two of the usual traits associated with the legend: the ability to mesmerise the intended victim and the way in which the victim can become infected and pass the 'disease' onto others. We must also remember the way in which these soul-suckers



Railsback and May about to make the ultimate sacrifice

early days!

But, as far as the cast goes, surely the most captivating role went to an unknown French actress, Mathilda May, as the 'Space Girl' (as she is credited), who plays her part totally nude for 95% of the time! Apart from being an obvious male box-office attraction, and there's no doubt about it, this girl is stunningly beautiful, she lends the film a genuine unearthly quality and seems to generate a captivating air of pure sensuality - exactly as Hooper had intended. Miss May certainly was a real find and the director publicly stated that "... had I looked another five years there's no way I could have done better..."

Fans of STAR TREK THE NEXT GENERATION can take great delight at seeing their beloved Captain, Patrick Stewart, as the director of the insane asylum who comes to a wonderfully realised bloody end in an almost demonic-type scene, yet another of the film's highlights!

Prior to shooting LIFEFORCE Hooper had a go at directing a pop-video, Billy Idol's 'Dancing With Myself', and as an interesting aside, always planned on casting Billy as one of the male 'vampires' first discovered with

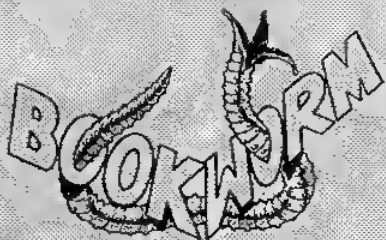
the girl, but this fell through due to British union restrictions.

However, there is still a musical link, one of the male vampires is played by Christopher Jagger, brother of Mick!

LIFEFORCE eventually opened in June 1985 after two long years for Hooper and was met by atrocious reviews (see 'What the press said') resulting in appalling box-office returns.

Co-writer Don Jakoby is very unhappy with the way the film turned out and has stated that as well as the casting, the story moves so quickly that a lot of "white space" between the words and sentences had been omitted which was vital for the characterisations and pacing, and in a 'Starlog' interview he said that, "... we're (Jakoby and O'Bannon) becoming increasingly fed up with people botching up our screenplays." However, Jakoby was there again for Hooper's INVADERS FROM MARS, and that, as they say, is another story!

Even though it was generally slagged-off by most magazines, I found it quite pleasing to note that 'Cinefantastique' editor, Frederick S. Clarke, was proud



EXTRA

THE SPACE VAMPIRES by COLIN WILSON

(Hart-Davis MacGibbon, 1976)

In his career Wilson, whose first novel was *THE RITUAL IN THE DARK* (Also reviewed this issue - Ed.) published in 1960, has produced a whole range of fiction, everything from pure realistic stories, to thrillers, fantasy and science fiction. However, the common thread to Wilson's oeuvre is that fiction should be used to examine philosophical concepts, the world of ideas and imagination. Wilson regards science fiction as a "release from kitchen-sink dramas and social tragedies". It gives the reader a real opportunity to expand consciousness and be outside the realms of the everyday.

His first science-fiction venture was *THE MIND PARASITES* (1967), which concerned, as the book blurb puts it, "malignant beings who lurk in the deepest layers of the human conscious, sapping the very life-force of mankind". *Space Vampires* is closely related to this novel in its theme of the domination of the human brain by outer-space hosts.

It originated, as Wilson says in the book's acknowledgements, in a discussion with the American science-fiction writer A. E. van Vogt, whose story *ASYLUM* is a "classic of vampire fiction". This was published in 1942 and depicted Earth as a sort of Botany Bay or dumping ground for the disposal of the vicious elements of the galaxy. Wilson has described how the idea for the final form of *SPACE VAMPIRES* occurred. "One morning in December 1975, I was falling asleep on the settee of a friend... snatching a couple of hours' rest after a journey from Cornwall by night train. Suddenly there floated into my head an image of a vast space craft - 50 miles long and 20 miles high-floating in space somewhere in the asteroid belt. It is pockmarked all over with meteorite holes, and a great rent has been torn in it by some collision... Back home the next day, I began writing *THE SPACE VAMPIRES* and wrote at top speed for six weeks".

The novel examines the intense struggle between the space vampires, who live by consuming the life-force of their victims, and the central protagonist, Olaf Carlsen, who is unknowingly responsible for bringing the vampires back to Earth from outer space. To combat the threat of the vampires to the human race, Carlsen enlists the help of Dr. Hans Fallada, sexual criminologist and vampire researcher. In pursuing their quarry they consult with the psychiatrist/psychologist/philosopher, Ernst von Geijerstam, whose theory is that all people are energy vampires to some extent.

In this way Wilson is able to explore several themes which are close to his heart, namely the criminal mind, the realm of philosophical ideas and the notion that "people possess powers which are far greater than they realize and yet don't know how to use them".

THE SPACE VAMPIRES is a complex novel, rich in scope and imagination. On the one hand it is a horror novel dealing with psychic possession, while on the other it harks back to the Gothic world of *DRACULA*. But above all it deals with the nature of human existence and its possibilities.

PHIL TAYLOR.



Peter Firth grits his teeth as he battles through the streets

are staked, not through the heart as per usual, but a few inches below in the creatures' energy centre. I liked the way that they shape-shifted themselves into human form and were sensibly shown unclothed (even so, female viewers must have got justifiably annoyed by the way that the males were only seen from the waist up - those shadows got everywhere - while the well-endowed Miss May is left to bare all!). I don't think that even I could have swallowed them wearing jumpers or silly silver suits, etc!! Where these 'suckers' leave their cloaked and fanged cousins standing is by the way in which they drain their prey of all life, a devastating effect and a far more visually rewarding experience than just a plain old two-fangs-in-the-neck-job!

LIFEFORCE is best enjoyed in a light-hearted manner when you can take the characters, the dialogue, the studio-bound shots - the whole concept, and let it rush over you in a fast-moving visual treat. If you haven't seen it, then don't prepare yourself for thought-provoking intelligent science-fiction and plausibility, just enter into it as if you were about to view a lavishly produced Jon Pertwee *DR WHO* episode - in fact Frank Finlay bears a striking resemblance to him in some shots - or any number of sixties British alien-invasion flicks that you may care to remember. Whichever way you view, you can't deny that it is a lot of fun!

Looking back, Tobe Hooper has let his feelings be known at how annoyed he was in the way that Cannon handled his three picture deal. "I basically had to watch as my films were taken away from me," he told *Fangoria*, but I wouldn't worry too much about it if I were you, Tobe old boy, because in my opinion, for what that's worth, you hiton winners with two of them (*INVADERS FROM MARS* being the turkey!). Happily, Hooper hasn't been too disgruntled with the genre and since then has delivered two more movies, **SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION** (reviewed in *FANTASY SYNOPSIS* #3) and an American cable financed chiller entitled *I'M DANGEROUS TONIGHT* starring *TWIN PEAKS* actress Mädchen Amick.

If you haven't caught **LIFEFORCE** on one of its recent late-night regional TV showings, then I advise you to seek out the Video Collection sell-through re-issue at your local stockist pronto!

So, come on you lot, go against the whining majority and give **LIFEFORCE** a try. I know you'll enjoy it, plus, how can you fail to like and ignore a film that has its female lead unclothed for almost the entire running time and one that boasts a closing shot that yearns for a rousing musical finale?!

PAUL J. BROWN.

CAST & CREDITS

Steve Railsback (Commander Tom Carlsen), Peter Firth (Inspector Carne), Frank Finlay (Fallada), Mathilda May (Space Girl), Patrick Stewart (Dr. Armstrong), Michael Gothard (Bukovsky), Nicholas Ball (Derebridge), Aubrey

Morris (Sir Percy), Nancy Paul (Ellen), John Hallam (Lamson), John Keegan (Guard), Christopher Jagger (1st Vampire), Bill Malin (2nd Vampire), Jerome Willis (Pathologist), Derek Benfield (Physician), John Woodnutt (Metallurgist), James Forbes-Robertson (Minister), Peter Porteous (Prime Minister), Katherine Schofield (Prime Minister's Secretary), Owen Holder (1st Scientist), Jamie Roberts (Rawlings), Russell Sommers (Navigation Officer), Patrick Connor (Fatherly Guard), Sidney Kean (Brash Guard), Paul Cooper (2nd Guard), Chris Sullivan (Kelly), Milton Cadman (1st Soldier), Rupert Baker (2nd Soldier), Gary Hildreth (Police Surgeon), Edward Evans (Doctor), Nicholas Donnelly (Police Inspector), Peter Lavestrom (1st Boy In Park), Julian Firth (2nd Boy In Park), Carl Rigg (1st Radar Technician), Elizabeth Morton (2nd Radar Technician), Geoffrey Frederick (Communications Officer), David English (1st Crewperson), Emma Jacobs (2nd Crewperson), Michael John Paliotti (3rd Crewperson), Brian Carroll (4th Crewperson), Richard Oldfield (Mission 1 Leader), Christopher Barr (Trajectory Officer), Burnell Tucker (NASA Man), Thom Booker (1st NASA Officer), Michael Fitzpatrick (2nd NASA Officer), Richard Sharpe (Rescue Ship Crewman), John Goughy (Colonel), William Lindsay (Colonel's Aide), David Beckett (Soldier), Sydney Livingstone (Ned Price), Ken Parry (Sykes), John Edmunds (BBC Commentator), Hayden Wood (Helicopter Pilot), Adrian Hedley (Director of Mime Artists), Corine Bougaard, Cal McCrystal, Bob Goody, Paul Anthony-Barber and Kristine Landon-Smith (Mime Artists).

Directed by Tobe Hooper; Produced by Menahem Golan & Yoram Globus; Screenplay by Dan O'Bannon & Don Jakoby; Based on the novel 'Space Vampires' by Colin Wilson; Associate Producer - Michael J. Kagen; Music - Henry Mancini; Performed by The London Symphony Orchestra; Additional Music by Michael Kamen & James Guthrie; Production Designer - John Graysmark; Director of Photography - Alan Hume B.S.C.; Editor - John Grover; Prosthetic & Make-up Effects - Nick Maley; Special Effects - John Gant; Special Visual Effects - John Dykstra; Costume Designer - Carlin Hooper; Costume Supervisor - Tiny Nicholls; Production Manager - Basil Sommer; Production Accountant - Len Cave; Production Coordinator - Marlene Butland; Unit Manager - Terry Lens; Location Manager - Geoff Austin; Models Location Manager - Roy Parkinson; Production Company Liaison - Michael Hartman; Producer's Secretary - Felicity Newton; First Assistant & Second Unit Director - Derek Cracknell; Camera Operator - Mike Fritt; Sound Recordist - George Stephenson; Continuity - Cheryl Leigh, Carol Snook; Stunt Arranger - Peter Diamond; Casting - Maude Spector, Ann Stanborough; Unit Publicist - June Broom; Stills Photographers - Bob Penn, Douglas Luke; Art Directors - Alan Tompkins, Bob Cartwright, Tony Reading, Terry Knight; Set Decorators - Simon Wakefield, Denise Exshaw; Make-up - Dickie Mills, Michael Morris, Sandra Exelby; Hairdresser - Pat Kirkman; Assistant Directors -



A kiss is just a kiss...

Richard Houtt, Melvin Lind, Tim Read, Tony Aherne, Paul Lowin; 2nd Unit Cameraman - Jack Lowin; Focus - Simon Hume, David Litchfield; Clapper Loaders - Tony Jackson, David Atkinson; Camera Grips - Colin Manning, John Fleming, Tony Gridlin, Tony Rowland, Brian Osborn; Camera Trainers - Nicholas Penn, Tim Wooster; Technical Advisors - Brendan Alimo, Alexander Beetham; Sound Designer - Vernon Messenger; Dialogue Editor - Nigel Calt; Additional Sound Effects - Jean-Pierre Lelong; Re-Recording Mixers - John Hayward, Richard Langford, David Anderson; Music Editor - Bob Hathaway; Music Mixed by Eric Tomlinson; Musical Advisor - Jack Fishman; Boom Operator - Colin Wood; Sound Maintenance - Dennis Nisbett; Special Effects Editor - Richard Hiscott; Assistant Editors - Matthew Glen, Ross Adams, Mike Redfern, Wayne Smith, Tim Grover; Special Effects Crew - Chris Gant, Chris Corbould, Ian Biggs, Paul Whybrow, Andy Williams, Roy Whitehead, Russell Diamond, Mark Meddings, Alan Barnard, Ray Hanson, Robert Nugent, Stephen Lloyd, Andy Smith, Roy Spencer, Nick Hamison, Michael Brady, Peter Dome, Simon Hewitt, Brian Chewings, Rita Nugent, Julie Beha; Special Visual Effects Produced by Apogee; Producer, Visual Effects - Robert Shepherd; Supervisor, Miniatures - Grant McCure; Supervisor, Optical Effects - Roger Dorney; Special Visual Effects Crew - Douglas Smith, John

Arthur, Marion Appleton, David White, Richard Smith, Kevin Herd, Ken Herd, Steve Cullane, Danny Parker, Jeremy Harris, Graham Freeborn, Hilary Steinberg, Mickey Morris, Kenny Wilson, Dennis Brown, John Schoonlaad, Jean Bolte, Janice Barnes, Laurie Warburton, Jason Reed, Marion Nicholson, Geoff Portass, Sue Higgins, Helen Renshaw, W. Petit, Jill Hopper, L.W. Batty, Joe Ross, Uta Trinks, Ron Baker; Art Department - Bob Spencer, Tom Adams, John Hoesli, Frank Walsh, Chris Parfitt, Roger Stewart, Norman Hart, Patricia Johnson, Steve Cooper, Martin Hitchcock, Carol De Jong, Mark Giles, Fred Evans, Reg Hill, George Wolstencroft, Keith Crossley, Paul Malinay; Modellers - Arthur Healey, Roy Scott, Bryan Cole, Nick Finlayson, Andrew Coupe, Frank Dickinson, Nick Kubicki, Peter Michael, George Skidmore, Robert Williams, Jim Machin; Video Department - Richard Hewitt, Mike Haaviala, Hugh Nicholson, John Fisher; Construction Manager - Tony Graysmark; Construction Buyer - Mike King; Electrical Supervisor - Bobby Bremner; Prop Master - Eddie Francis; Production Buyer - Dennis Griffin; Property Department - Ray Rose, Dennis Simmonds, Derek Creedon, Al Smith, Percy Bidwell, Ian Shubbrook, Peter Bryant, Brian Humphrey, Charles Ixer, Brian Gamby, Kevin Wheeler, Michael Bacon, Sean Conry, Jimmy Spiller, Keith Pitt, Derek Knowler, Dan Evans, George

Malin, Stan Thomas, Tommy Frewer; Electrical Department - Tom Brown, Bill Nicholson, John Clark, Alec King, Russell Lister, Stuart Reid, Terry Townsend, Alan Grayley, Eric Melville, Eamonn Dunne, John Barry; Wardrobe Department - Jimmy Smith, Don Mothersill, Renee Heimer, Brian Cox, Simon Murray; Construction Department - John Parks, Micky Law, Raymond Dyer, E. J. Hooper, Jim George, John O'Boy, Micky Biesty, Stuart Williams, Gordon Routledge, John Sams, John Robson, Eric Mason, Leonard Morse, Pete Beasley, Shaun Walsh, R. J. Davies, Wally Few, Richard Brown, Albert Key, Nick Sergeant, J. W. Rivers, John Rae, Pat O'Loughane, John O'Connor, Brian Sullivan, Gerald Stewart, H. McKenzie, Sydney Wood, Ray Hawtree, Mark Overall, Harry Portlock, Bob Todd, Harold Fryer, Bill West, Ken Fleming, Mark Townsend, Kevin Wardle, Mike Hayward, Michael Traynor, Les Butterfield, Austin Carter, T. Dyer, John Newman, Mark Wilkinson, Ron Harrison, Steve Rice, John Addison, Steve Challenor, Richard Fox, Stan West, John Naisbitt, John Wildgust, Stephen Weston, David Coldham, Paul King, Sid Barnes, Steve Page, Vic Predgen, Geoff Bacon, Jim Buckley, Geoff Grant, Tony Horsfield, Paul Jiggins, P. Lavey, D. Miles, Mick Murphy, Brendon O'Reilly, Mitchell Pope, Paul Reynolds, Kevin Smith, Ray Smith, John Woods, Danny Cullinane, Del Brewer, Bill Cough, Bill Bush, Ray Joffe, Malcolm Myster, Eric Nash Jr., Michael O'Callaghan, Michael O'Quinn, Terry Silbey, Eddie Connell, Paul Taggart, Phil Babbage, Ray Staples, Mickey Chubbuck, Ilva Vasic, Eric Nash, Ray Tricker, Bill Churchill, E. Hall, Patrick Gleeson, Ray Reeve, Martin Geeson, Paul Grange, John Nethersole, Roy Shave, Dean Coldham, Sid Holt, Winston Depper, Eddie Evans, Peter Dunne, David Silverton, Mark Williams, Bruce Newell, Bill Shepherd, Alan Rowland, Steve Lowen, Gary Pledger, David Fullbrook, Mickey Guyett, Bob Harper, J. J. Hurley, Colin Lovering, Ted Lynch, M. Richards, Les Jiggins, A. L. Bullock, Brian Morris, Gary Crosby, Peter Mounsey, Alan Hooper, Don Wilson, Paul Crowe, John Roberts, J. Pearson, Mike Gunner, Arthur Healy, Ernie Howe, John Bede, Eric Taylor, J. W. Ede, Eamonn Redmond, E. Wolstencroft, Leonard Chubb, Dennis Cooke, Paul Mitchell, Ron Newwell, Alfred Perkins, Thomas Lowen, John Newwell, William Howe, Ricky Stone, Fred Gurty, John Cogan, Keith Evans, Martin Phipps, E. Lansbury, George Orr, John Morris, Les Phipps, Peter Thompson, Roy Skinner, Bert Thornton, Don McLellan, J. Lansbury, Kevin Matthews, Ian Grant, Ian Murray, Russell Prosser, Simon Alderton, Philip Evans, Richard Stachini, James Stachini, Peter Stachini, Les Singleton, Gary Reynolds, Frank Hennon, Fred Denman, Paul Wolstencroft, Alan Smith, John Dyer, Phil Murray, Larry Wells, Micky Wells, Ray Reynolds, Colin Smith, Desmond O'Boy, Barry Wilson, Patrick Worsley; Wire Effects - Steve Crawley, Kevin Welch; Accounts Department - Jack Churchill, Craig Berwick, Sylvia Ellwood, Lyndy Trower, Jane Trower, Duncan Fraser; Production Department Secretary - Nikki Williams; Production Runner - Mark Gosling; Director's Runner - Tony Hooper; Unit Drivers - Joe Pace, Fred Chiverton, Arthur Miller, Frank Jolly; Unit Nurse - Susie Bevis; Contact Lens Consultant - Richard Glass; Fire Officers - Alan Sutton, Ron Campbell, Dave Hodgson, Peter Gibson; Helicopters courtesy of The Ministry Of Defence; Cameras & Anamorphic Lenses - Joe Dunton (Cameras) Ltd.; Lighting Equipment - Lee Electric (Lighting) Ltd.; Catering - J & J Foods; Transport - D & D International Locations Ltd., Willie's Wheels; Grip Equipment - Grip House Ltd.; Shipping Agent - Southland Air Services; Travel Arrangements - Value Travel Agency; Additional Costumes - Bermans & Nathans Ltd.; Titles - Ron Hickson, Alan Wheatley; Title Opticals - General Screen Enterprises; Photographed on "Eastman" Colour Film; Colour by Rank Film Laboratories; Sound Re-recording - Pinewood Studios; Music Recording - Abbey Road Studios; Recorded in Dolby Stereo; Made by London Cannon Films Limited, London W1, England at ThornEMI Studios Ltd., Borehamwood, Herts and London locations. (phew!!)

1985.

Length: 9,111ft.
Running Time: 101 mins. (97 mins. for video).

TRI-STAR PICTURES.
THE CANNON GROUP INC.
The Video Collection (VC 3291).



...well almost!!

The Busker

By Johnathan Thomas

Right from the moment that I first saw him, he somehow evoked a deep sense of foreboding; something malevolent and sinister, and I took an immediate dislike to him. Of course, I can't say much about him now because he isn't here any more, but I'm sure that he had something to do with the whole state of affairs. I think that an explanation is in order.

I work as a trainee bank clerk in the city of Birmingham, having graduated from university in London. I quite like the job; I'd always fancied working in a bank, and my teachers at school repeatedly told me how I had a 'head for figures'. Anyway, I'd been working in Birmingham for two months - enough time I might add to get fairly well accustomed to a city which I'd never come within twenty miles of previously - when I saw him for the first time, one lunch break. The Busker.

Of course, there's lots of buskers in Birmingham - down the markets, by New Street Station, in the shopping centres or on street corners - so the fact that he was there didn't surprise me. However, as I walked past him, the air seemed to grow colder all of a sudden; I caught a mental whiff of the presence that he exuded, which made my skin prickle. Don't get me wrong, he was an ordinary enough looking bloke; shortish, rather plump around the waistline, moustache, ruddy complexion and untidy brown hair. Yet there was something about him which scared me a little.

And then there was the music that he was playing. Previously, I had always thought of buskers as either guitar or mouth-organ playing musicians, conjuring up lively and (to a limited extent) inventive tunes, designed to capture the attention of passers-by and to liven up the usually drab street surroundings. Yet this busker was playing a flute (I think it was a flute; I know next to nothing about musical instruments, but it was definitely a member of the woodwind family), and he was playing a sombre, haunting melody. If the rest of the people hurrying past were anything like me, the music did anything but liven up the stairway on whose landing he stood.

Quite the opposite, in fact; the melancholy tune echoed up and down the stairs, diminished only slightly in volume by the sound of people busting past. Come to think of it, the music reminded me in a way of Latin America or the Orient.

As it happens, I only stole a quick glance at him, for I would have appeared rude had I stood and gazed at him. Besides, for a reason that I can now hazard a guess to, I somehow felt an overwhelming urge to leave his presence as soon as possible. Tucking my hands into the pockets of my suit trousers, I hurried on my way, the tune still ringing in my ears.

Strangely enough, the passers-by seemed to like this curious busker's music, for his unzipped canvas bag was always generously smattered with silver coins; it was either that or he was the object of an unusual compassion. As a result, he was always in his usual place every time I walked that way, on a dingy landing of the steps connecting the Pallasades shopping centre with Station Street. Every day he continued to play his flute with renewed enthusiasm, although his tunes varied little and all of the ones I heard were of a melancholy nature. Indeed, during one Saturday shopping trip, a young girl of about six burst into tears when she passed him, burying her face in her mother's chest. I was a couple of steps behind the woman and her daughter, and I stole a quick glance at the busker. To my surprise, his face remained blank as he concentrated on his music, either unaware of or choosing to ignore the girl whom he had just upset. And I had always thought that buskers were rather friendly people, likely to stop playing and soothe distraught children such as this girl.

Once, not long after, I saw someone attempt to converse with him. A tall, gangling student-type with a receding hairline and a big bony nose dropped a twenty-pence piece into the man's bag where it tinkled as it landed, indicating that he was doing quite well for himself as usual. The youth nodded at the busker's flute. 'That's a

funny tune. What is it?'

He received no reply. The busker's eyes remained shut as if he was deep in concentration. I, meanwhile, had stopped just within sight of the pair; I don't know why, but I was intrigued. 'Play down here often, do you?' persisted the youth, his accent distinctly north-country.

A couple of seconds passed, and still the man ignored him. The youth shrugged to himself and went on his way, passing me as he hurried down the stairs. The busker continued playing as if nothing had happened.

This went on for nearly a month. Then, events in Birmingham took a dramatic turn. I picked up the newspaper one morning to find that a teenage girl had been brutally murdered outside the Bull Ring Bus Station. Her butchered corpse, still warm, had been discovered shortly after midnight by two students returning from a nightclub. The luckless girl had been completely disembowelled.

A nasty feeling crept into my stomach, taking a firm grip and refusing to let go. The first thing that struck me was how close the corpse had been to the busker's usual haunt (forgive the pun). I tried to shake off the feeling, but somehow I couldn't help suspecting that he had something to do with it. In the subsequent police enquiries, nothing about the killer could be deduced, except that the murder weapon was definitely a knife, and whoever had committed the murder knew how to use it; apparently, several of the policemen who appeared on the scene had thrown up. Just three days later, a twenty-year old youth was killed after he fell in front of a bus in New Street. The horrified driver had just taken a right turn into Corporation Street when he saw a boy fall out of a seething throng on the pavement, right under the front wheels. He jammed on the brakes less than a split-second later, but he was still able to discern the dull thud above their screeching, and felt the tyres hit the obstacle in their path. Disembarking, the driver joined the horrified mass on the pavement, staring down dumb-struck at the boy. A very macabre description had been placed in the Evening Mail (reading it, I was glad that I hadn't been eating at the time), painting a gruesome picture of the youth's body, a huge indentation in its torso where the tyres had gone over it. The man's rib cage had been crushed to pulp, thus compressing the organs underneath to bursting point.

Needless to say, talk in the local pubs was of little else; two particularly violent deaths in the space of four days, both in the city centre. Yet still the busker played his flute as I walked past, his eyes always closed and his bag showered with coins. Gradually, however, my overall fear of him spread; as each day went by, I noticed that passers-by began to hurry past him, casting the dod nervous and apprehensive glance at the man with the moustache, and not stopping to root out any spare money. Mothers bustled curious children past him, hardly daring to look over their shoulders as his sombre music filled the air...

I was actually there when it happened. It was Friday, nearly two weeks after the young man had died on New Street. At the end of the week, I always treat myself to a visit to a food outlet during my lunch break; what the hell, it saves me cooking a meal when I get home. This time I had settled for McDonald's, although in the past I had tried a wide variety - Wimpy's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Deep Pan Pizza to name but a few.

I entered at about ten-past-one; it was crowded as usual, and the shortest available line must have been composed of at least six people. However, I had a whole hour to kill, so I was in no hurry; in addition, I think I'm a very patient person. I reached the counter after not too long a wait and gave my order to the member of staff in front of me, a short, petite girl whose flowing dark hair was tucked underneath her green company cap. I ordered a McChicken sandwich, regular fries and a vanilla milkshake; once the food arrived, I took one look at the crowded, unappealing ground floor and headed up the stairs. When I reached the top, I darted over and successfully captured a corner seat previously vacated by a fat, grey-haired woman with a wrinkled face and wearing a duffel-coat. Slitting down, I tore the corner off the small sachet of salt, sprinkled it over my chips and inserted the red and yellow striped straw into my milkshake, taking a big slurp.

Two minutes passed, during which I had consumed half of the sandwich and a few handfuls of fries. I wiped my mouth and was about to wash the food down with some of the milkshake when I heard a commotion downstairs.

A few people sitting near the top of the stairs threw a casual glance down, but they couldn't have seen much as their attention soon returned to the food in front of them. Sipping at my milkshake, I wondered whether to wander over and have a look down, but one glance at the handful of people awaiting a table cast this from my mind. As I set down the plastic cup and picked up the half-eaten sandwich, a shrill scream rent the air: 'Fire!'

I dropped the sandwich, the mayonnaise in the middle squirting out onto the table surface. By now, there were people screaming downstairs and my nose had begun to detect the faint odour of smoke. Most of the people upstairs stood up (a few continued to wolf down their food; I can guess what became of them) and turned round, hurrying over to the stairs. Some looked puzzled while others were a look of fear. Having been one of the first to reach the stairs, I took a few steps down and stole a glance at the ground floor.

At first, my brain simply refused to comprehend the scene my eyes took in. I believe this happens to you sometimes; there are some things that your brain simply disallows. Terrified people were streaming out of the double-doors, away from the roaring flames which were licking the service counter. Some of the harried members of staff were attempting to quell the blaze with fire-extinguishers, but evidently having little success as they turned and vaulted over the counter, ending up behind the demented mdo trying madly to escape. The air was thick with a dense grey smoke, and the terrible screams were punctuated with fits of coughing which varied in intensity.

And then, nroror of horrors, the doors jammed. The screams doubled, and most of the rearmost people turned, only to be confronted by an advancing wall of fire. Through the big windows I could see the people on the pavement outside staring helplessly in horrified fascination at the scene in front of them.

From what I'd read in the papers about previous fires, the smoke is always twice as likely to cause death than the actual flames themselves. Consequently, I yanked off my tie and wound it round the lower half of my face so that it covered my mouth and nostrils. Just as I had finished doing this I heard a muffled, rumbling bang - which I later learnt was one of the chip machines, full of boiling fat, exploding. A sea of flames roared towards me, rushing forward like an unchecked tide of water and then several screams from behind me reminded me that it was time to get moving.

I darted down the stairs, wincing as the flames grabbed at the right hand side of my face, but not stopping. When I got to the bottom I threw my arms up over my face and sprinted towards the window, taking a tremendous leap just before I reached it. I fell, hearing the glass shatter and my legs buckled from underneath as I landed...

The next thing I knew was feeling the cold November air on my cheeks and the hard concrete of the pavement underneath my back. In the distance, above the screams, shouts and roaring of the fire, I could hear the sirens of the fire engines.

And that's what happened. I was praised for my heroics, and later learned that I had saved a great number of lives. but when I woke up in hospital, with a badly burnt scar on my right cheek and ear, I learnt that twenty-two people had died, mainly from asphyxiation. Sorry to leave you in suspense, but I never discovered the cause of the fire; you'll have to guess that one for yourselves.

Yet now comes the most intriguing part of my tale. When I was eventually released from hospital, I found the busker had vanished; never again did the sound of his flute echo through that dark and dingy passageway on Station Street. Through some extensive enquiries, I learnt that he had disappeared shortly after the McDonald's fire. Disappeared, as they say, never to return.

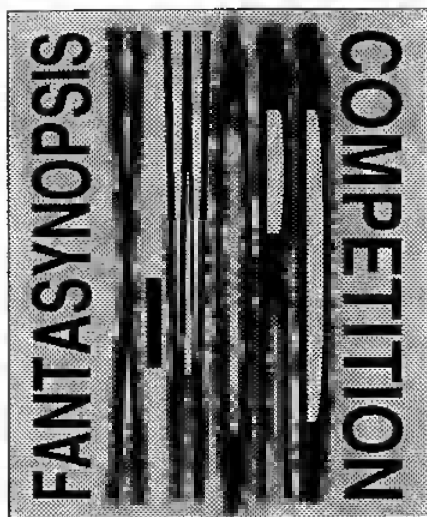
Now a year later, I am wiser. I have carried out some research in the local library on material which I scoffed at in the past. I've come up with two things. Firstly, I now believe in what are commonly known as 'harbingers of doom' - beings from beyond our world whose appearance signifies the forthcoming of some dreadful catastrophe. The history books are littered with references to such beings.

Secondly, I now know the tune that the busker played which used to frighten me. It was used regularly in Ancient Egypt as a lament for the dead.

So I now avoid and fear buskers; yes, even those who stand smiling on street corners or in subways, and cheer people up with their lively tunes.

THE END





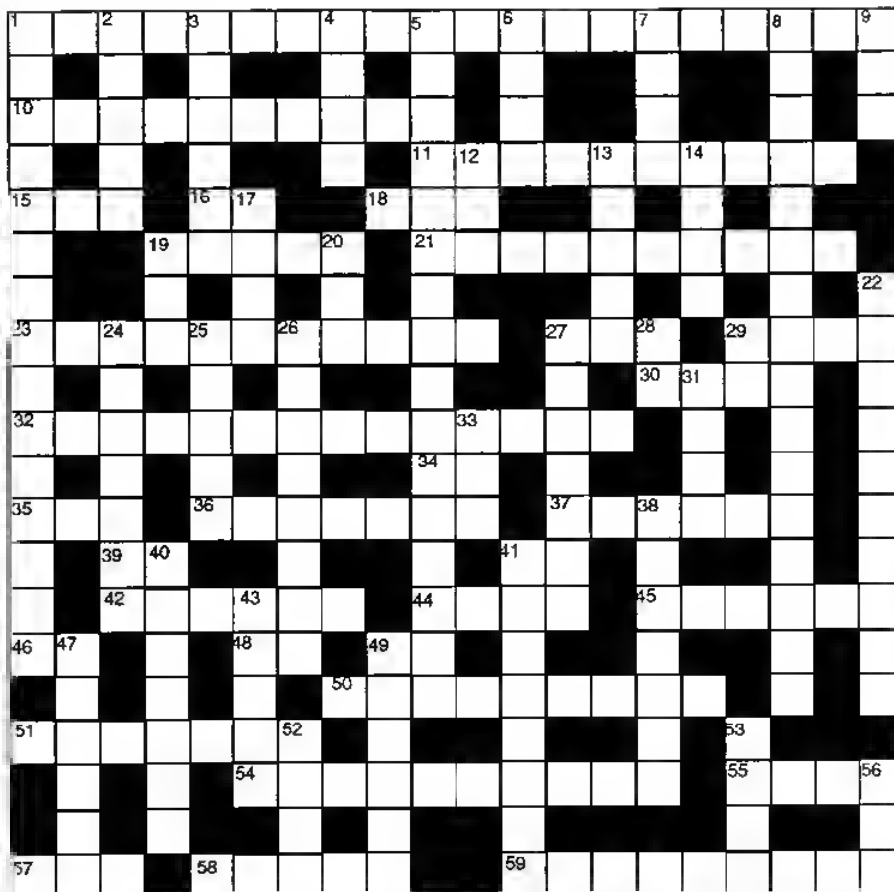
**WIN A COMPLETE
SET OF
WIDE SCREEN
SPECIAL EDITION
VHS VIDEOS**

FANTASY SYNOPSIS, in conjunction with CBS/Fox Video and The Associates, presents a special fantasy X-Word competition with 3 sets of Wide Screen classics (that's five tapes in each set) to give away. The titles on offer are: **STAR WARS, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, RETURN OF THE JEDI, ALIEN and DIE HARD.** The first three correct entries pulled from our cardboard box (1) after the closing date will win. Send your completed entry to the editorial address, marking your envelope "WIDESCREEN X-WORD" and don't forget to include your own name and address! If you do not wish to ruin your prized copy of this mag then please feel free to copy or photocopy the page. This competition is not open to FANTASY SYNOPSIS contributors or employees of CBS/Fox and The Associates.

Good Luck!

CLUES ACROSS

1. American actress whose fantasy films include the TV movie **THE ANNIHILATOR** (9,4,7)
10. An Oscar winner in **ROSEMARY'S BABY** and Maude to Bud Cort's Harold (4,6)
11. A doctor in **ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK** and a genius in reality! (10)
15. Terry Bourke directed us to one for the damned in 1975 (3)
16. Roddy McDowell starred in this 60's variation of the Golem legend (2)
- 18 (+8 Down). Alternate and more appropriate title for George Melies **THE MAN IN THE MOON** (3,11,5)
19. Just one of those "video nasties" that got up so many people's noses in the early 80's (5)
21. See 46 Across.
23. **THE FAKE LOAD** (Anagram, English title of 1970's Japanese film) (4,2,5)
- 27 (+32 Across). Early David Puttnam production which keeps being "forgotten" among his more illustrious credits! (3,5,9)
29. Martin, script-writer on **SATURN 3** (4)
30. Maiden name of the second Mrs. Roman Polanski (4)
32. See 27 Across.
- 34 (+54 Across). William Castle presented him to us in



- the early 60's (2,10)
35. Whose mother's house did Jack Clayton take us to in 1967? (3)
36. William Shatner and wife visited the one of the spiders (7)
37. What Lucio Fulci gave us in a woman's skin (6)
- 39 (+59 Across +49 Across +52 Down). aka **KILL HIM FOR ME** (2,2,5,2,2,4)
- 41 (+42 Across). How Holmes & Watson found murder being committed in 1979 (2,6)
42. See 41 Across.
44. It was him or Glenda according to Edward D. Wood Jr. (4)
45. Disaster movie in every respect (6)
- 46 (+21 Across). Crap camp movie inflicted on us by Sergio Garrone (1,1,10)
48. Where **FORBIDDEN PLANET**'s monster came from (2)
49. See 39 Across.
- 50 (+57 Across). Film that originally played with **INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS** (3,6,3)
51. Monster played by Ferdinand Hart in 30's French horror film (2,5)
54. See 34 Across.
55. Joseph Ellison's advice to those tempted to go in the house (4)
57. See 50 Across.
56. The never ending one started in 1984 and (just to prove it) continued in 1990 (5)
59. See 39 Across.

CLUES DOWN

1. **VARIOUS FALLS CON** (Anagram of 60's film title) (8,2,5)
2. Find found by Klaus Kinski & co. in 1984 (5)
3. Real life inspiration for **PSYCHO**, **TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE**, et al (2,4)
4. See 9 Down.
5. See 29 Down.
6. Role that saw Fred Ward unarmed and dangerous (4)
7. Disney sci-fi starring Jeff Bridges (4)
8. See 18 Across.
- 9 (+4 Down +14 Down). Film that marked the return of Maxwell Smart (3,4,4)

12. Mr. Reason or Clive Barker's monster with a raw head (3)
13. Fought the flying saucers in 1956 (and presumably won) (5)
14. See 9 Down.
17. Tuff territory fought over in 1985 (4)
19. Ursula Andress was in commanding form in this 1960's Hammer hit (3)
20. 'The *** of Barnabas Collins' - the title of a **DARK SHADOWS** paperback book (3)
- 22 (+40 Down). **RACE FOR PESKY WOMEN** (Anagram of 1980's film title) (6,4,3,4)
24. The red kind faced by Rod Steiger in 1986 (7)
25. Name given to Frankenstein's monster in 1960's Mexican film version (5)
26. One of those films based on the life of 3 Down (8)
27. Russ, **TWIN PEAKS**' daffy doc. (7)
28. Initially meant as Spielberg's little sci-fi film (1,1)
- 29 (+56 Down +5 Down). Where the living dead ate their breakfast (2,3,10,6)
31. Alan, who lead us through **THE MEPHISTO WALTZ** (4)
33. The real killer in **THE FUGITIVE** only had one (3)
38. There've been plenty of them on Broadway since but they first appeared there in 1945 (7)
40. See 22 Down.
41. Swinging British film from 1960 with a cast featuring Hammer leads Christopher Lee, Oliver Reed & Gillian Hills (4,4)
43. Dracula had his last ones in 1981 (5)
47. Caroline Munro's starr role from 1980 (6)
49. Comes before after for insipid USA TV movie about aftermath of nuclear holocaust (3,3)
52. See 39 Across.
53. Ken, set decorator on **DR. STRANGELOVE** and several Bond films (4)
56. See 29 Down.

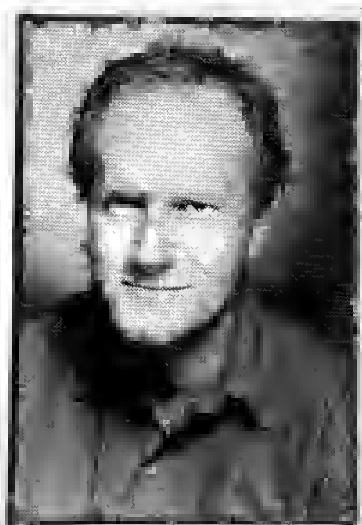
Compiled by Mark Merton

**CLOSING DATE
31st January 1992**

"We Shall See, What We Shall See..."

FANTASYNOPSIS PROUDLY PRESENTS AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
DAVID MCGILLIVRAY

Readers of FANTASYNOPSIS should need no introduction to the career of the multi-talented David McGillivray, but just in case there's a few of you out there who can't quite place him (shame on you!), he was responsible for writing six of Britain's most infamous - and certainly goriest - horror films: **HOUSE OF WHIPCORD** (1974), **FRIGHTMARE** (1974), **THE CONFESSIONAL MURDERS** (aka **HOUSE OF MORTAL SIN**) (1975), **SCHIZO** (1976) - all with director Pete Walker and two more with Norman J. Warren - **SATAN'S SLAVE** (1976) and **TERROR** (1978). None of them broke any box-office records but they have endeared themselves, quite rightly so, to many a horror-fanatic's heart. Who could forget the sheer bleakness of **WHIPCORD**, a drill-wielding middle-aged cannibal in **FRIGHTMARE** and a deranged clergyman in **THE CONFESSIONAL MURDERS**, etc? However, screenwriting isn't the only string to David's bow, as you will find out in the following interview which was conducted at David's London home in May 1991. Read on...



David McGillivray

A recent publicity pic

Paul J. Brown: You're a man of quite a few talents, playwright, critic, actor and screenwriter, how would you best describe yourself?

David McGillivray: Jack of most arts and master of very few is how I've described myself before, and I think it's true.

What do you actually enjoy doing the most?

To tell the truth, I've always enjoyed performing most because it's the easiest, but the trouble is, I discovered a long time ago that I'm not really a tremendously good actor and it's because of that, that I had to diversify into so many other things. Nowadays when any kind of performing comes along I do still enjoy that more than anything, but it's very, very rare and whenever anything else comes up I always say 'yes' because I enjoy trying anything.

What spawned your interest in the cinema in the first

place?

Well, I remember being taken to my first film by my parents when I was six and it was **SINGIN' IN THE RAIN**. I knew then what I wanted to do. It was purely because of the way that film made it appear that the movie industry was colourful and exciting and glamorous that I wanted to be something to do with films, and I never changed my mind from that day onward. The only thing was that I had to compromise, I realised that I wasn't going to be a movie star so I decided I was quite happy to be involved in films in any respect at all. Ultimately that's how I ended up, writing about them, writing them... hanging around movies... yes, I've always been hooked.

Has horror always played a part in your interests?

Yes, I discovered very soon after discovering the cinema at the age of six that there was a dark side of entertainment that was more enjoyable. Don't ask why I was attracted to it, I'm not a psychologist and I don't know what made it appealing to me. Very early on I saw one of the **QUATERMASS** series on television and I started reading Edgar Allan Poe and it went on from there. I loved frightening myself... it was a delicious feeling and I couldn't get that feeling anywhere else.

I've heard that you came to work with Pete Walker by accident is that the case and what's the story?

Yes, I didn't plan it. I was doing one of my other jobs... in 1971 I was the assistant editor on the British Film Institute's **MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN** and I discovered that Pete Walker's films were getting better and better. Up until that time he had been one of the worst directors in the country, I'd seen his early sex films and they were beyond description they were so bad... but he made a film called **COOL IT CAROLI** and that decided me that he had suddenly learned what film-making was all about and overnight almost he'd become the best British sexploitation director. I remember **COOL IT CAROLI** being head and shoulders above any other exploitation film at that time, so I wanted to interview him and I found out where his office was, rang him up and said I wanted to interview him for **FILMS AND FILMING**... and he'd never been interviewed before so he was chuffed. So I did that interview and that's how I met him. Two years later a friend of his called Ray Selfe, for whom I'd already written a screenplay, recommended me as the writer of his film **HOUSE OF WHIPCORD** and because he'd met me and he knew me, he decided he could trust me and that's how I became a writer for Pete Walker.

WHIPCORD commenced with an on-screen blurb, I quote: "This film is dedicated to those who are disturbed by today's lax moral codes and eagerly await the return of corporal punishment", was that your own personal view or just a stab at sensationalism?

No it was Walker. He'd finished the film and the then censor, Stephen Murphy, felt that it was an attack on the 'Festival Of Light' he wanted the film to appeal to that kind of audience. He hoped he would stir up controversy by suggesting that this is where we were leading and this was where society was going in trying to bring back capital punishment which the 'Festival Of Light' wanted to do at that time. So, he was trying to be controversial and that title was put on right at the end, the film had already been to the censor it was just being released and it was tacked on days before it opened. It was a pure publicity ploy.

Your screenplay was based on an original Walker story, did you make any major changes to his story and how

much of it was you?

No, I wasn't allowed to make any changes at all. He had written the story, he'd begun to have it scripted and when I arrived there was about twelve pages of dialogue by a writer called Alfred Shaughnessy, who was best known at that time for writing 'Upstairs Downstairs'. I said I'd like to do this and that and he made it very clear that he didn't want any changes, he just wanted me to write it as fast as possible... he had a deadline to keep and just wanted a script and I came up with it in two weeks and I followed his story word for word I wasn't allowed to make any diversion from the story at all.

Having said that, was WHIPCORD the kind of movie that you had a yearning to make?

Always... I loved it as soon as I read the story. I remember the excitement I felt because it was the kind of thriller I always wanted to write. Previously I'd done a sex-comedy called **WHITE CARGO** which was a comedy, the sort of thing I wasn't interested in at all. With **WHIPCORD**, with the chase theme, the old dark house... yes... it had a lot of very, very appealing aspects for me.

What was your reaction to Penny Irving's 'French' accent?

I thought it was surprisingly good. You have to bear in mind that Penny Irving, at that time, was just a model. I don't think she'd done anything at all apart from maybe a couple of lines in a sex-comedy. Pete Walker discovered her and I think we were all very doubtful about whether she could pull it off and all I can say is that it was better than I expected. From the way you phrased the question I presume you weren't that impressed?

No, I wasn't.

You've gotta remember that at that time there was a whole colony of British starlets who had no ability whatever and they were brought into films because actresses wouldn't take their clothes off and models would and the standard wasn't high. All I can say was that Penny Irving was better than the rest, so I just thought it was a blessing she was as good as she was. She went on to do 'Are you being Served' (She was also a hostess on the abysmal



Grim goings on in the **HOUSE OF WHIPCORD**

McGillivray on **HOUSE OF WHIPCORD**

"**HOUSE OF WHIPCORD** is about two ageing lunatics who capture young lovelies and take them to their prison on the moors for a bit of merciless chastisement, and it's the only one of my films I can bear to watch today."



The US ad mat for WHIPCORD had Penny Irving wearing a bikini (!) and mis-spelt McGillivray with a 'u' - the latter error also appeared on the British poster

'Mr & Mrs' Ill Assitant (Ed.). All those girls were just around at that period for decorative purposes (laughs) they weren't expected to act and before that Walker had had a hell of a lot worse than Penny Irving.

The overall mood for the film was set with the first appearance of Sheila Keith, how highly did you rate her performance and do you think she was influential in the overall success of the movie?

Yes, I rate Sheila Keith very highly indeed. I don't know where Walker found her, I don't think she was the first choice for the role because he always wanted 'names' and could never get them, they wouldn't work for him... for the money he was offering. So he found Sheila Keith and she was perfect... In fact they all were, I loved everybody on that film, I thought they were terrific. Sheila Keith was such a success and so obviously of a very high standard that she went on to do more Walker films, so that speaks



Poor Penny Irving goes through hell

for itself. She is also a very nice lady and we got on very well. When the time comes for me to direct my first film Sheila Keith will be in it.

Personally, I found WHIPCORD to be a genuinely harrowing experience, an excellent piece of cinema. How pleased were you overall and have you viewed it recently?

I was delighted, it was everything I'd expected, it was the film I wrote... and of course it's very rare for a screenwriter to have that experience, the film you write is not the film you see on the screen because by the time the film is edited it's changed because so many other people have put in their two-penneth. WHIPCORD was exactly the film I had in my head, so for a young writer it was a dream come true.

How old were you at the time?

Twenty-six or something like that, but very inexperienced and star-struck still. I thought it was terrific, it's my favourite film and the only film of mine that I can still watch. I've got a video and when people come round I don't mind running it at all.

I can proudly say that I saw it at the cinema twice and I've since viewed many times on tape. With the video version I found that it suffered greatly with the lighting, or lack of lighting, in the night-time shots, were you upset by this at all?

Yes. What we have there was a video from a very bad 16mm copy. The reason that the lighting is so bad is because that 16mm copy was bad. When I went round lecturing about films the only version available was that 16mm copy and that's when I noticed that something was wrong. As you know some of the night-time scenes are virtually impenetrable and all you can see is eyes and matches; and with FRIGHTMARE as well I'm afraid it's the same problem and it's very disappointing... I don't know if there are any 35mm prints available now, I don't know what's happened to them. They are not like that, the 35mm print you saw in the cinema was not as dark... but I haven't seen that for sixteen years. That was the last time I saw a decent print of it.

Exactly how successful was it as I believe it only cost about £60,000 and did it make you any money at all?

No. I was paid £200 for it and that's the only money I ever saw. I believe that the film wasn't particularly successful... it was, as you know, ahead of its time. People weren't ready for that or FRIGHTMARE and it's easy to forget now that on their initial releases these films didn't do very well... they didn't do that well in the States either as far as



HOUSE OF WHIPCORD

I know... so, it was around about this time that Walker started to lose money. Again, as far as I know, this is only guess work, he would never talk about budgets and finances and I never knew the true situation... but as I understand it, he made a lot of money on the early sex films and as soon as he started going in to what he called 'Terror' movies he found he was ahead of his time and he wasn't making enough money.

Why did he use the term 'Terror' movie?

He didn't like to use the term 'Horror films' because that to him suggested Hammer Films, which was still very big at that time and he didn't want to suggest that he was producing films with monsters, and his type of film was very much more 'domestic suspense', as you know, and very different from that image of a horror film at that time.

You've mentioned FRIGHTMARE already, I'd like to talk about that now. Again, as with WHIPCORD, this seemed to be making some sort of comment about the British judicial system with a speech that was sentencing Sheila Keith's character, coming straight after WHIPCORD was that a coincidence or what?

No... he wanted to do something similar. Walker had aspirations as a director. He didn't want to keep churning out rubbish and HOUSE OF WHIPCORD, as far as I know,



'Prisoner Cell Block H' this ain't - Sheila Keith gets mean with the whip



They don't make sleeves like this any more!

was the direction he wanted to go in. He very much wanted to cause controversy... he wanted to be out of the rut really... he didn't see himself as an exploitation director... and **FRIGHTMARE**, yes, very much led on from **HOUSE OF WHIPCORD**... he was trying to cause trouble again.

FRIGHTMARE was chillingly different to the usual British horror film at that time...

I hope so?

... what was the critical and public reaction?

Terrible... as I'm sure you know, the critics slaughtered it and the film was a failure. It came off very quickly... before the end of its run as I remember. It opened at Christmas and was the wrong film at that time. As far as I know, public reaction was not good either and it was much, much later that the film was re-discovered and we're talking almost (laughs) a generation, certainly more than ten years... it was eight to ten years before the 'cannibal' films. People just weren't quite ready for that kind of harrowing experience.

Sheila Keith again... the appearance of her twisted blood-spattered face when she first wields the ol' Black & Decker was masterfully handled and shot, what do you

McGillivray on **FRIGHTMARE**

"**FRIGHTMARE** is a very nasty piece of work... it was designed to make people feel ill... Pete Walker and I sat in his London office thinking up gory murders and when we thought of something that we found utterly reprehensible I would go away and write it down. It was film that was way ahead of its time."

think lured her to play the part of a cannibal and to Walker's films in general?

I don't know... up until that time she'd been playing mainly on stage and in sit-coms on TV. The films brought her in great parts at a time when there weren't many good roles for a woman of her age. She had such good fun on **WHIPCORD** because she got on so well with Barbara Markham and Dorothy Gordon... they called themselves 'The Three Witches' on that... and she wanted to do more. It is surprising I know, it's hard to believe but it's true, she loved doing it!

Who actually decided on the drill?

Well, that was me, but only because there had to be a way of getting the brains out of the skulls and I didn't know how it was going to be done... so I rang up a nurse and asked how brains were extracted and she told me about this process called trepanning which involves a surgical drill drilling a little circle out of the skull and so I thought, what would she have on the farm... and presumably she could get hold of a Black & Decker and that's how it started.

That's a wonderful story. With the release of your next picture, **THE CONFSSIONAL MURDERS** (aka. **HOUSE OF MORTAL SIN**), the finger was pointing at the workings of the Catholic church, was there much 'publicity' from religious bodies trying to stop it getting released?

No, none... I thought that it would stir up more trouble than either of the other two films... but it didn't, people ignored it, which was very disappointing. I think they thought it was so tawdry that it wasn't worth bothering over. Walker is a lapsed Catholic and this film meant a lot to him... exorcising guilt or whatever.

Another fine British stalwart was brought in to play a twisted psycho, and it definitely needed a respectable actor, was Anthony Sharp the first choice?



Meanwhile, down on the farm... "More brains... more brains!!"

No... as I've said before, Walker always wanted 'names' and, as far as I know, and all I've got to go on is what he told me, he wanted Peter Cushing... and it was Peter Cushing for a long time, right up until we started shooting... and then all of a sudden Peter Cushing wasn't available anymore. How we ended up with Anthony Sharp, I don't know... I think Walker probably thought that if he wasn't going to be able to get a 'name' then at least he was going to get somebody respectable and Sharp had done **A CLOCKWORK ORANGE**... so, I think that's why he chose Sharp above other actors without 'names'. What did you think of him?

I thought he was very convincing and frightening, he



MIRAGE FILMS PRESENTS **FRIGHTMARE**
RUPERT DAVIES
SHEILA KEITH
Part X

*Sheila Keith having fun in **FRIGHTMARE***

didn't look as if he could do anything like that.

Oh good... I thought he was a great actor, no doubt about it... yes... he was excellent... and, in case you were going to ask this, no, he didn't like doing it! As I remember there was more than one actor on that film who found it all very distasteful.

One of the things I've enjoyed whilst researching for this interview has been spotting you in all sorts of places on screen. I couldn't see you in this one though...

No, I couldn't get down there on the day he wanted me. Someone rang up one morning and said 'Come down here now' (laughs)... but, I couldn't do it.

That's fair enough... personally, although I loved the others, I thought that **CONFSSIONAL** was one of your best...

Really?! That's interesting?

Yeah! I loved lines like "... the cleansing rain...", etc., was all that dialogue yours and what's your opinion of the final product?

I find them (all the films except **WHIPCORD**) difficult to watch now because there is too much dialogue for my liking... too slow... and I want more action... I don't know why Walker didn't stop me writing all those pages of waffle... and that's why I can't watch any of them now because I just want them to get going. Yes, I like words too much, I always have done... and yes, the dialogue was mine... but, for my money I was far too self-indulgent.

Still with **CONFSSIONAL**..., I quite liked the way that Sheila Keith seemed to be inserted to get you away from the major villain... as soon as I saw it for the first time I thought 'ah, she's bound to be the main baddie' - who devised her look for the role?

Ah... that was me... and I can't quite remember why, but a friend of mine's father had something wrong with his eye and he had that pair of glasses with one black lens... and whenever I went round

to visit him I thought that his father looked very sinister... he was also an alcoholic and... I found him very frightening to look at. So, when the opportunity came for devising a really sinister villainess I gave Sheila Keith those glasses!

The best things come from real life don't they?

Yes, absolutely, yes.

Whenever I think of one of your films, I always think of exciting gore-laden plots populated by characters with sideburns and wearing Afghan coats - the seventies - was that a really good era for you and would you like to go all through that again?

McGillivray on THE CONFSSIONAL MURDERS

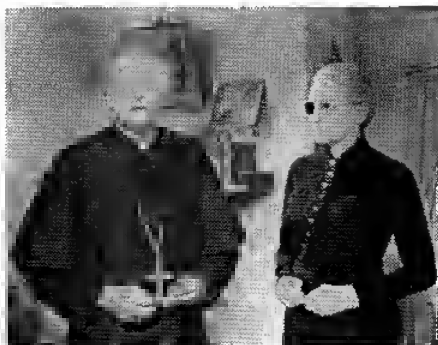
"It was originally HOUSE OF MORTAL SIN because Walker wanted to remind people of HOUSE OF WHIPCORD... it's about a barmy Catholic priest who goes around murdering his parishioners... that sounds like a great idea for a film, but it was too far fetched to work."



Confessions of a clergy man

Um... the clothes are another reason I find it very hard to watch the films now because they do appear so funny... No, I couldn't go back to the seventies because of the clothes really! I can't believe I used to wear stuff like that and I'm acutely embarrassed by it. But, the seventies were a great time for me professionally and I always felt that it was in the seventies that I had my 'fifteen minutes of fame' (laughs)... so everything since then has been an anti-climax... I've done nothing to equal it!

SCHIZO was your next, and last, Walker project. I have to say that I found it to be a bit of a disappointment, too many red-herrings, cliches and an instant give-away title... am I right in supposing that changes were made without your consent as it didn't seem to have your stamp on it?



Sharp and Keith in CONFSSIONAL...

Well it's a very sad story... I didn't want to do it. I didn't want to do more than three films really, I thought a trilogy... I'm a Virgo and I'm very neat... I thought I'd do

three films and that would be it. But, he did want to do another one and he couldn't think of an idea... and he came up with this script which had been around for years written by Murray Smith, who'd written COOL IT CAROLI... and I didn't like it, it was very straight-forward, as you know, just a murder mystery... and it came back again and again... 'Why don't we go back to the Murray Smith script?... and finally I buckled down... I don't know why... I shouldn't have done it. It was unsalvageable. I don't want to cast aspersions on Murray Smith because he was a far more successful writer than me and there's never a week goes by without something written by him on TV, I'm sure you've seen him... but this was a script that didn't get produced because it wasn't producible, and we had to try and make it work! No, changes weren't made without my consent... that film was a result of trying to make that who-dunnit work when it

obvious from the first scene who the killer is... and it didn't work did it?

Coming after the others I really missed the presence of Sheila Keith, was she not available or was there nothing



SCHIZO

STARRING
LYNNE FREDERICK • JOHN LEYTON • STEPHANIE BEACHAM
JOHN FRASER • SCREENPLAY BY DAVID MCGILLIVRAY • PHOTOGRAPHED BY PETER JESSOP
PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY PETE WALKER
A PETE WALKER PRODUCTION
COLOR BY TECHNICOLOR

A NILES INTERNATIONAL RELEASE

The US authorities obviously didn't MIND about this poster!

in it for her anyway?

She was in it originally, when it was said, 'Oh yes, Sheila Keith can play the mother', but maybe the mother was cut out of the script... this is where my memory does fail me,



"Why won't you let me in?" - SCHIZO



I only have eyes for you - the seance sequence from SCHIZO

because I seem to remember that there were several versions of the script... I was fired at one point...

Really?

Yes... I'd done one version and it was dreadful... Walker fired me, he got in other writers, he fired them, I came back on it and by the time we'd finished I think possibly the part that was going to be played by Sheila was out... and I think that's the only reason she's not in it.

The psychic sequence with the bulbous eyes and funny voice seemed to belong to a completely different film, was that your idea?

No, that was in the original Murray Smith script... given that there was an element of the supernatural in that script and it had to be changed. I remember originally there was tap-dancing medium... and it was ludicrous... it stayed in through all the versions but by the time we'd come to the end there was still a medium there... and what can I say... I don't know why it's there (laughs)... you know how it is?

I think so... what I did like though was the 'ad' line, 'When the left hand doesn't know who the right hand is killing...', did you dream that one up?

No, no, that was dreamed up by Columbia or Warner, whoever they were in those days and it did cause a lot of trouble because it was deemed offensive... and MIND,

McGillivray on SCHIZO

"SCHIZO is a who-dunnit which fails because everyone knows from the first scene who the killer is. It shouldn't have been made and I think that if you were to put the video on now I'd have to leave the room!"

the mental health organisation, objected to it and I had to be changed. So, although that line was still used for the American release it wasn't over here. The film opened with that line and then all the posters had to be covered up with a new line...

What was the new line?

I can't really remember... the original that you quoted obviously suggested that all schizophrenics were murderers, so that's why it had to go... I can't remember, it was replaced by something much more anodine... I just can't remember.

Walker went on to make THE COMEBACK, etc., why were you not involved in any of these?

The next film after that was HOME BEFORE MIDNIGHT... and he wanted to cause more trouble... he was in that mode and he felt that the way to cause trouble was to make a film about a film about under-age sex... and I think I let it show that this was something that I really wasn't interested in... and we kicked around ideas in the summer of '76... and simultaneously I got involved with other things. I had a theatre company and we went to Edinburgh and we were a tremendous success and I'm afraid I became much more interested in that and by the time I got back from Edinburgh Walker had taken the hint and had given HOME BEFORE MIDNIGHT to Murray Smith and he wrote it...

And you never got involved again?

That was the end. After that I wrote an article about Pete Walker for a magazine called CINEMA, which has now folded...

Was that the STARBURST linked one?

That's right...

A good magazine.

It was, but it didn't make any money though... and I wrote things about Walker which he didn't like and haven't spoken to him since 1982.

Next came your involvement with low-budget expert Norman J. Warren, what drew you both together?

I think there was an overlap... so round about the time I was finishing with Walker I'd already started with Norman. Norman and I go way back, it's as simple as that... and I've known him since I was a teenager. He was directing his first film, HER PRIVATE HELL, in a cutting-room in the sixties and I was in a cutting-room next door, doing another of my jobs (laughs)... so, we kept in touch and it really is as simple as that. Norman always loved horror films and he got together with Les Young, who was the cameraman on his early sex films, and he asked me to start writing. The first screenplay I did was never filmed, that was called THE NAKED EYE which Vincent Price was going to be in... and later James Mason, that collapsed and the next one, SATAN'S SLAVE, was set up very quickly after that.

Was Norman an admirer of your previous films?

I think because the Walker films had done quite well... I mean, even that they were finished and released (laughs)... I think he went to see them and he knew I wrote very fast, which was very important in those days, you couldn't take too long over a script... I could do them in two weeks...

I find it amazing that you can write something like that in just two weeks.

It was very common in those days, you didn't worry too



McGilivray himself in SATAN'S SLAVE. His hands were also featured in several close-up shots.

much about that sort of thing and other people were taking less than that... ten days, a week, was nothing. Walker wrote them over a weekend!

How did Warren compare to Walker?

Totally different... totally different directors. From a writer's point of view, Walker was a writer's dream, he didn't alter a word... not a comma... it's very rare, as you know... Norman, who I like very much indeed and we're still friends, and we still see each other, but, he was more typical in that he liked input and so he re-wrote and a lot of other people re-wrote as well. The producer used to re-write those films... and as a result I didn't always recognise (laughs) what was on the screen.

You already mentioned SATAN'S SLAVE, an extremely nasty affair, not afraid to hold back on anything, be it tacky S&M shots or very gory visuals...

McGilivray on SATAN'S SLAVE

"SATAN'S SLAVE is a mystery to me because half of the people who see it, love it, and the other half think it's immensely boring and dull... I haven't seen it since it first opened, so I'm not sure what it's like? As I remember it's about this poor girl who is lured into an archetypal old-dark-house by a coven of wicked occultists... and I have no idea whether it's any good or not?"

Have you seen the uncut version?

Yes.

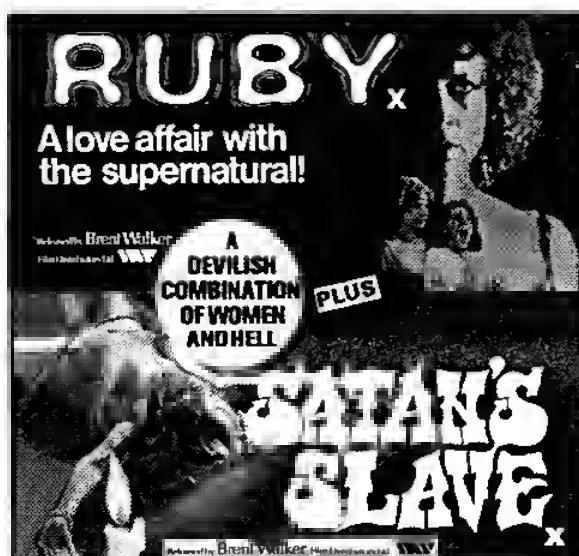
On right, that's the one we're talking about then.

Yeah... is there anything you wouldn't write for the screen?

Oh! I didn't expect that! (long pause) Then or now is the



A tacky shot from SATAN'S SLAVE



SATAN'S SLAVE on a double-bill with Curtis Harrington's RUBY

crucial thing. I think then, when I was young and I would have done anything to get my name on the screen, I think the answer is I would've written anything, whatever they wanted I would've written... and now, because I'm older and attitudes have changed... there's a lot I wouldn't write... I wouldn't write slasher films in which naked bimbo's are carved up in summer-camps, it's as simple as that... it just doesn't interest me.

Michael Gough was wonderfully creepy in an almost Hammer-like role, did you rate his performance at all?

Yes, he's one of my favourite actors and Norman was very lucky to get him. Again, you've got the situation whereby you've got a very, very good actor who likes appearing in horror films... and that's our luck! He'd done a lot before that, as I'm sure you know, going right back to HORRORS OF THE BLACK MUSEUM... so, yes, I did rate his performance.

It's nice to see him getting more recognition today with BATMAN, etc.

Yes, isn't it... oh, yes, he was always one of my favourites, no doubt about it... very underrated... a great British actor.

You mentioned the video earlier - the version I saw

yearned for letterboxing as a lot of the actors were way off-screen in some of the dialogue shots, do you know if any country has released it in this format?

I doubt it very much. Norman wanted to use, I think it was Techniscope, he liked that shape screen and I think for some reason it was cheap. I think he got some sort of deal because of it... but he said afterwards that he would never use it again... it caused enormous problems and, of course, on video it's useless, utterly useless. I don't know what it's like on video, I can't imagine?

People are completely missing!

Well, Norman's a very old style director because he was using scope, he was trying to use it in the old style, with people on the opposite sides of the screen talking to each other... and of course, he didn't even have video in mind in those days, it hadn't been invented! No, to my knowledge, none of the films have been released letterboxed.

The scene involving the girl and the scissors was very sleazy, was that a joint idea?

No, that had nothing to do with me at all. That wasn't in the script, they were very keen to get foreign sales and at that time it was essential for sales in the Far East for scenes like that to be very graphic and that's what they went for in Japan and so forth, as far as I'm aware. The scene was shot without a script, as I remember, they just did it at the end of the day. I saw it at the first preview for the crew and the reaction was aghast... people were terribly shocked by it. I remember my friends taking me to task for it and saying that it shouldn't have been in, and to my knowledge it was cut out straight away... and nobody else ever saw that version and it's only recently in the past couple of years that people have told me that the original version has been on video... and it's obviously true because you've seen it... and that came as a complete surprise to me, I never thought that version existed.

I particularly loved the 'nail-file in the eyeball' effect, was that one of your own fiendish creations?

I can't remember is the answer to that... with Walker, I devised the murders and with Norman, I think it was fifty/fifty... Norman likes that sort of thing very much and in his other films there's a lot of very similar murders... so it could have been him it could have been me... and I think that's lost in the mists of time.

I read in an interview with Norman that he feels that SATAN'S SLAVE is "very confusing and rather slow", is this a view that you share and, if so, who is to blame?

It's me... it's the dialogue again, far too much of it. One scene was cut out completely, I believe it was shot and then it was ditched because it was just two people talking in a room... and you didn't need it... you don't need all this information, so it just went... I think there was five minutes of that alone... and there's still too much talk, and, as I recall, TERROR was an attempt to make a similar film but with no dialogue or very little anyway, as a result of SATAN'S SLAVE being far too wordy.

TERROR was next on the menu... I felt that the opening was very atmospheric and traditional, would you like to be involved with a truly gothic horror film?

No (laughs)... it doesn't interest me at all... do you mean the period or the style?

The style.

No... what I like is Pete Walker's modern domestic terror style... when I make my own film it's going to be much closer to that than anybody else's.

I can't wait for it!

Thank you. I like situations that people in the cinema can identify with and I find gothic-horror incredible and it's as simple as that... I have to believe what I see on the screen... my number one film on your list (This the Favourite Fantasy Films of... Ed.) will be **THE TEXAS CHAINSAWMASSACRE** because I believed I was there.

Did some of **TERROR**'s financing come from the 'Daz' washing-powder company?

No to my knowledge.

You can't fail to notice that lingering close-up on that packet in the middle of the screen!

I can't remember it (laughs) but I don't think 'Daz' would've lent their name to a film like **TERROR**... was it a joke of some sort? I don't know, nothing to do with me though!

(laughing) I had to ask you. The scene involving 'Bathtime for Brenda' was most amusing, was this drawn from some of your earlier film experiences?

Yes, I wrote a film called **I'M NOT FEELING MYSELF TONIGHT**...

And **CAN I COME TOO?**

I didn't write that one actually... I was in it though... I was also in **I'M NOT FEELING MYSELF TONIGHT** in a sequence in the garden of a country home involving an orgy on the lawn... it was directed by Joe McGrath... virtually what happens on that film happens in **TERROR**, with the same dialogue including the actor who was involved in **I'M NOT FEELING MYSELF TONIGHT**, his name was Curtis something, and the character's name in **TERROR** is Curtis as well! So, yes, it's real life!

Staying with **TERROR** - on the whole I thought that the special-effects were fairly decent, although I did chuckle somewhat at the sight of that floating car, were you generally pleased by the way they were handled?

I remember that the special-effects on that film were amazing for the budget. They were all done on a budget of nil as far as I can remember, so it was very impressive... but the problem with **TERROR** is that it's patched together from ideas and scenes in other films... there was never really a plot for **TERROR** and I think the producer had just seen **SUSPIRIA** and a couple of other films at that time and it was just patched together from scenes in those films... so, I was a bit disappointed with that and I said, 'Everyone's going to say this is straight out of **SUSPIRIA**' and he said, 'No, don't worry, by the time it comes out everyone will have forgotten it', and he was right, nobody ever mentioned it.

Do you know what my next question was going to be? **TERROR** has often been referred to as a non-Italian giallo, were the stabbings inspired by the horrific opening of **SUSPIRIA**?

What can I say? (laughs) It was directly inspired by **SUSPIRIA**. I saw **SUSPIRIA** at the Warner and I loved it and I thought I'd made a major discovery here... but, little did I know that everyone else was also discovering it, including the producer, Les Young... and he said, 'We've got to make a film like **SUSPIRIA**', you know, it was the old style 'Let's make a film like a film we've just seen'. It's ironic that the Italians are best known for that now... but it was the other way round here, it was a direct crib from **SUSPIRIA**.



TERROR strikes straight for the heart



Whilst on the subject of Argento, were you aware that his **INFERNO** emulated the 'pane of glass in the neck' effect from **TERROR**?

No?

It's almost the same.

Well, um... (laughs)... will we ever know. I can't remember that scene in **INFERNO**... and if Argento pinched it from **TERROR**, then I'm flattered.

Still with **TERROR**, the telekinetic ending and the reappearance of the witch was genuinely eerie, well-written and nicely filmed, so, why haven't we seen any more McGillivray horror films?

Well... **TERROR** came out in about 1978-79 and that was the end of the British exploitation film industry. Basically, there were no more McGillivray films because there were no more films, it was as simple as that! When the Conservatives got in in 1979 they scrapped the subsidising of low-budget films... that's my memory of the situation, and overnight that industry just folded... so there was no more work for me or anyone else in the industry... and I had to find other things to do. By that time I was already involved in theatre, and I kept doing that, I was also getting into radio and television as well... and there have been a couple of other films as well that you haven't mentioned, I'm delighted to say, because they're not very good.

As far as I'm aware, of your horror films, if you call them 'horror' films...?

I do, yes.

Right... only **THE CONFESSORIAL MURDERS** is legally available on video in this country, do you know if there are any plans to re-release any of the others, considering the current climate of self-through, and how do you think they would fare with the BBFC?

I deal with the BBFC a lot because I get a lot of letters from

McGillivray on **TERROR**

"**TERROR** is the sequel to **SATAN'S SLAVE** and it was put together by myself, Norman J. Warren and Les Young... made up from the best bits of films we'd seen earlier that year. All I remember about that film is that I found it very hard to write and Les Young kept phoning me up saying 'When's it going to be finished?'... so, I don't have the happiest of memories of that film... but I believe the special effects were quite good considering the amount of money the films cost."

Front cover of the **TERROR** campaign book (FILM REVIEW) readers asking about censorship... the number one question is, 'How can I get into the industry?', and the number two question, every month, is, 'Why has this film been cut... Why can't we see this film?', and so I ring them up every month... I talk to them a lot and the climate as such at the moment that none of these films will ever be considered for release again, it's as simple as that, until the climate changes we will never see them.

Here at **FANTASYNOPSIS** we thought that the only one that might run into trouble would be **WHIPCORD**.

I think they all would... I don't think any of them would be allowed uncut... but the theme of something like **FRIGHTMARE** is anathema to the BBFC at the moment.

It turns up on TV now and again doesn't it?

There's a cut version been shown on cable, but that was a long time ago, I gather it was on HVC. None of these



TERROR video sleeve



The blood flows thick and fast in TERROR

films have been on for some years now. Everyone, as I'm sure you know, is very, very wary at the moment of breaking the law.

SCHIZO and **SATAN'S SLAVE** have been released elsewhere in stronger versions - were any of the others available in longer formats, ie. were the British cinema versions of **WHIPCORD** and **FRIGHTMARE** fully uncut?

WHIPCORD, as I understand it, was complete apart from maybe one whiplash... that's what Walker told me. **FRIGHTMARE** was completely uncut when it was shown at the cinemas. **THE CONFSSIONAL MURDERS** and **SCHIZO** have both been cut for video... and when I saw **SCHIZO** I was astounded that all the murders were gone... they are very tame by today's standard, and I cannot imagine why that material had been cut? So, elsewhere in the world, yes, there are much longer versions.

Which of your films have proved to be the most financially successful?

It's very hard to know... because I don't have a stake in any of them, I was paid flat fees in each case... I'm never made aware of how the films are doing financially...

Which one made you the most money?

(laughs) We're only talking hundreds for all of them... I think the most I got paid was maybe £800 - £900 towards the end. My memory is that the early Walker films didn't do well and that the two Warren films probably did... they did make their money back... I think they did well in the States, but it's only a feeling I've got.

Have you been generally pleased by the quality of the actors that have been in your films?

Yes, I think we've been very lucky... I can't off-hand think of any performance I didn't like.

Even the small parts were great weren't they?

Yes, yes... I agree. I'm astounded that so many good actors wanted to work for so little money... we really are talking chicken-feed. To my knowledge, even people of the calibre of Stephanie Beacham was working for something like £100 a week!

Really, how did that compare at the time?

Well, even in those days that was a ridiculously low amount of money.

Did you also make a film called **TURNAROUND**?

TURNAROUND was my last film, I think it was made in 1986... originally it was Ray Selfe's project and originally the story was about a gang of Hell's Angels who bust up a party, and the party-goers get their revenge on them. It was a kind of British **DEATH WISH**. The script changed hands a lot and it ended up being made in Norway... and the script was changed out of all recognition. Its only been released on video here, it has appeared on cable-TV as well... and it's not very good (laughs).

The title doesn't seem to go with the plot.

No, they get their revenge so there is a turn-around, but, of course, it doesn't inspire you to want to see the film... it means absolutely nothing without prior knowledge of the film. It didn't do very well... it was directed by a guy called Ola Solum and I saw a film he made called **ORION'S BELT**, a Norwegian film, and it was very, very good, I liked it... so, it was a good guy directing it, but he was simply way out of his depth... shame.

Apart from cameos in your own films, can you fill me in on some of your other acting credits?

Mainly theatre... there haven't been many other films... the only other film I was in that I had nothing to do with the script was **CAN I COME TOO**, that was directed by Ray Selfe, who was an old friend of mine and who got me started...

Didn't you have a small role in **CROMWELL**?

I was in a lot of films very early on... yes... before I started writing them, yes... I was in **CROMWELL**, **JULIUS CAESAR**... **THE GAMES**, a Michael Winner film... **SAY HELLO TO YESTERDAY**...

I'm not familiar with that one.

No, you wouldn't be... I think I was a hospital patient... but more recently, up until a couple of years ago, I had a touring theatre company and for quite a while that was virtually full-time touring around the country.

What about television?

Not for a long time... again, in the early days I was always propping up bars in things like **'Z CARS'**, but not since then, no.

How do you feel about the current state of censorship in films and video?

Well, how long have you got? It's a hobby-horse of mine. In a nut-shell, whereas I'm a pretty reasonable person in most respects, I am an anarchist as far as censorship goes and I honestly believe there should be no censorship whatever... and not even a rating system. That's only because I've been to other countries and I've seen how a system works elsewhere. It is a fact that there is no censorship in a country like Greece, the rating system has broken down, and yet Greece is still a civilised country and they are not producing films in which five-year old children are snuffed... and so it seems to suggest to me that an equally civilised country like Great Britain could emulate Greece's example.

I don't agree with censorship but I do agree with classification.

At a pinch, you know... if parents want to be advised which films are suitable for their children then, yes, I'll go along with that, but I don't honestly believe that parents take any notice of classification... kids will go and see the films they want to see... and when I was a kid everybody in my school was making themselves look older in order to see films that they weren't supposed to see... so, whatever you do, however much you try to keep children out of films, they will get in if they want to see them... so what's the point?

Whilst researching I found reference to a few short films, one of them called **OINK!** - what was that all about?

Well, in my early years I did have aspirations to be a director and I did make a couple of short comedies... one was called **LOSING TRACK** and the other was called **OINK!**... **OINK!** is a very experimental work which was made around the time I was working with Norman (J. Warren), and I think Norman was the sound-recorder or was he the editor... maybe both? And Les Young, the producer, was the cameraman... and it's a bit of a sort of Warhol exercise really, it's a film in which people laugh. I just got the cast drunk and recorded them laughing! There's another film called **THEERRAND**, which I'm quite proud of. That was a short we made in 1980. I wrote and produced it and a guy named Nigel Finch directed and it was inspired by a nightmare I had... the only time I've ever written a film based on one of my dreams and that was released with a Sean Connery film called **OUTLAND**, and it was supposed to lead onto a whole series of shorts but, low and behold, around about the turn of the eighties we stopped making shorts in this country, so that was the end of that!

I've read that you said somewhere that you were partly responsible for distributing what you consider to be the worst ever horror film, **BLOOD OF FRANKENSTEIN**, what was so bad about it, what was your company and what else did they distribute?

This was a company called Palladin and it was run by a guy called Peter Jacobs, who was a friend of Ray Selfe... it's all very clique... Peter Jacobs set up this distributor and I was a member of the board, I think I may have been Head of Publicity or some such nonsense... this would have been the seventies and they put out about half-a-dozen films before they collapsed. One of them was **BLOOD OF FRANKENSTEIN**. My memory of Palladin was that Peter Jacobs would get these films and I would go along to see them at preview theatres and I would say things like, 'This is the worst film I have ever seen, do not distribute this film', and he would then go and put it out... and this applied to every single one of them... they were terrible! I remember seeing **BLOOD OF FRANKENSTEIN**... have you seen it?

No.

It's beyond belief... I think it's an Al Adamson film, with a lot of people in it who should have known better like Lon Chaney... it's just utterly inept... that was one film I said 'Don't put out', another, a kung-fu film called **THE BLACK DRAGON**, I said 'Don't release it', and he did! Yes, I did say that I was very ashamed and I still am.

What more can you tell me about your alternative theatre company?

Briefly, films were my great love and I wasn't particularly interested in theatre, but when I was forced out of films and into theatre, I suppose I developed a love for it and I've still got it. I've been touring for fifteen years now... I've



FRIGHTMARE

directed and written about twenty-five plays now, all comedies... and because of that I've become very involved in what's generally called 'fringe theatre' in this country. In 1987 I published a book called 'The British Alternative Theatre Directory', and I've published and edited four editions of that... so, yes, I'm now very involved in alternative theatre.

Any genre productions?

Not really, no... we did a play called 'Creepy Crawlies' which was my homage to the type of films I grew up with in the fifties and sixties... it was a 'film' performed live on stage in black and white. I think it was a tremendous achievement and underrated at the time because I'd never seen anything quite like it before... it was inspired by a film called **FIEND WITHOUT A FACE**, one of my favourites.

What film projects did you undertake in Holland?

Well, the only two I'm prepared to talk about are a short called **EEN DIKE LIEFDE**, in English it means **FAT LOVE**, it's about a doctor who falls in love with a fat girl he's trying to put on a diet... and then I did a feature called **THE LADY AND THE PEDDLER**, which is really the last horror film I did... it's cannibalism again, but it was in Dutch and to my knowledge it's never been released outside Holland. There's a famous cameraman on it, I think it's Fred Tams, who's done quite well for himself since, he's in Hollywood now.

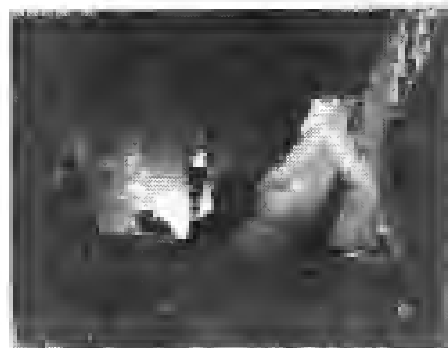
A lot of today's film buffs know you as the 'Mr Answers' man from the pages of FILM REVIEW - how long has the column been running?

In August (1991), I've been doing it for twenty years... I started in **FILMS & FILMING** in 1971 and that magazine has now folded, but there was an overlap and in 1986 I started doing it for 'FILM REVIEW'. It's still a job I absolutely love, I don't know the answers to any of the questions, but I do enjoy looking them up!

How much time do you spend on it?

The column takes a day to put together... I'll put the letters together in the morning, then I'll go up to the British Film Institute, look all the answers up, come back in the evening and write it all out. It's also full-time because I have to keep my records up to date.

Have you ever been totally stumped by a question?



SATAN'S SLAVE

Oh yes... (laughs) many times... in fact I did put in the last issue of 'FILMS & FILMING' the ten most difficult questions I've ever been asked... and there are some, usually the 'Whatever happened to...?' and I just cannot trace those people. If I had an unlimited budget and could just spend all day on the phone, I suppose I could find them... but some people who disappeared in the thirties and haven't made a film since, what can I do? I just have to put down 'I don't know where this person is, does anyone else?', and I have to say that, nine times out of ten, nobody else knows where they are either... so I feel kind of vindicated.

What sort of questions do you really enjoy?

My favourite kind of question is... 'How many actors have been knighted?'... 'How many actors have reached 100?'... the kind of question that you can't find the information to anywhere else... after twenty years it gets a bit boring, you know, you can find the answers to most of these questions in other books, but questions like that, that need a lot of original research, I love, because I'm a Virgo and I enjoy researching very much. So, if I get a question like that I'll think nothing of spending weeks, months, putting the answers together. I've got a couple coming up which are taking a very long time... one is 'Can you name all the left-handed actors?' and another one is 'How many films have full-frontal male nudes been in?'. Well, it's going to take a long, long time... but, that is the kind of thing I really love.



The HOUSE OF WHIPCORD

Are there many un-filmed scripts that you have lying around?

I've written twenty screenplays and ten were produced... the other ten will never be produced... their time has passed, it's as simple as that... **THE NAKED EYE**, I did a rock-musical for Pete Walker in 1976 called **SVENGALI**... the only film I really regret wasn't filmed was called **PLASMID**, which I wrote for a director called Stanley Long, and it's a great horror film about a colony of creatures living in the sewers underneath London, and I was very, very disappointed that the money ran out for that two weeks before they were due to start shooting. The only film it exists in is the novelisation, the paperback was put out of the screenplay, and I've got that, but that's the only record I've got of it... haven't even got a screenplay! I did a documentary on British exploitation films of the fifties for the BBC around about 1982 and it was never broadcast... and I don't know what's happened to that... shame, it's a very interesting documentary.

Do you get to read much in the way of fan publications like FANTASYNOOPSIS?

Yes, yes, I try and keep in touch, mainly because of my job on **FILM REVIEW** and because so many of the readers are interested in horror and censorship, so I have to keep in touch.

What else can we expect from you in the future, are there any plans to rekindle your cinematic interest in horror?

I'm glad you asked me that, yes, there is... for a long time I was very, very loathed to direct a feature and I didn't think I was capable, but for some reason, eighteen months ago, I changed my mind... it was mainly due to the parlous state of horror films in this country. I've been very, very disappointed for a long time that we have the ability to make good horror films, witness **HELLRAISER** which is one of my favourites, but because of all manner of reasons, but mainly attitude at the moment, we just don't make them... and so I thought if nobody is going to do them I'm going to have to do it myself... equally nobody is going to give me the money to make one, so I am mortgaging my flat, I've got a couple of other properties and I'm going to direct a horror film later this year with my



McGillivray meets director Russell Mulcahy at a past 'Shock Around The Clock'

own money, in the old Pete Walker style, I mean that is how he made his films... ha never had anyone else's money until the end, they were made with his own... nobody does it like that anymore because it's generally regarded as stupid... I think it is stupid, but, I don't gamble on anything else... this will be my big gamble, I sincerely hope it doesn't lose money because I'll be in terrible trouble and then I'll never make another film again as long as I live, but obviously I feel optimistic about it... it's called **AFTERDEATH**.

What's it about?

It ploughs the same furrow as **FLATLINERS** really.

Will you involve any of your old gang?

I will try and involve a few friends... who ever is free and who will work for the least amount of money!

I can't wait to see it... How would you like to be best remembered?

(laughs) I do a lot of things... In films I've specialized in horror, in theatre I've specialized in comedy... in journalism I've done something else again, but, all in all, I hope that I have entertained people... I get a great amount of pleasure out of making people happy, even as I say these things I'm aware that it does sound tremendously naif, but, I've had a tremendous amount of pleasure from the cinema and theatre in my time, and I hope that my work has entertained people to the same degree.

It has.

Thank you.

With that, I'd like to thank you for your time and for permitting this interesting interview.

You're very welcome, thank you.

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Christopher Lee is the subject this time around. Introduction is in English, rest is French. Also out is a special on John Carrodine.
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HAVE YOU ZINE IT
continued on page 30

Argento

In at the deep end

Dario Argento,
the Italian Master
of Terror,
in conversation
with
Paul J. Brown

All admirers and devotees of director Dario Argento were in for a treat at the end of June 1991 for the good old Scala Cinema in London were playing host to the launch of a new book entitled 'BROKEN MIRRORS/BROKEN MINDS : The Dark Dreams of Dario Argento' (by GOREZONE and THE DARK SIDE critic Maitland McDonagh), and the Italian master was in attendance to sign copies (and anything else that was thrust at him!). Also on show were three of his films: **TENEBRAE**, **OPERA** and **INFERNO**.

Luckily for myself I met Alan Jones in the foyer and he said he would try and get me in to see Dario!

He obviously pulled the right strings as about three-quarters of the way through **TENEBRAE** I was hauled out of my seat and ushered, at an alarming pace, down a corridor and into a little room at the top of the cinema where I was introduced to the man himself, Dario Argento.

As you all know, his English is not perfect (but it sure beats the hell out of my Italian!) and we started to talk - I was amazed that he remembered talking to me at last year's **SHOCK AROUND THE CLOCK**!! I was a nervous wreck as I had come ill-prepared and was frantically trying to conjure up questions off the top of my head. I didn't know how long I was going to get and I wasn't sure how long to spend on a particular subject or film, so I tried to cover as much ground as I could!

According to my two(!) camera-men (Nigel and Bruce, thanks guys!) the interview went well - I'll let you decide. I have opted to leave it exactly as Dario said it and I hope that you find it interesting.

Paul J. Brown: How are your films received by the mainstream critics in Italy?

Dario Argento: Normally the main critics don't like the horror picture and most are against it. My pictures... some good occurs... some people love, some people no love them, but normally the main critics hate them... like in England.

Was horror your first love?

Yes... I remember Edgar Allen Poe when I was ten... eleven-years old and that changed a part of my life... the tales of Poe... it was another world... it was cruel, strange, fantastic, bloody... this was really important in my life.

Was that the main influence on your film work?

Yes, absolutely... the first influence... but then there was many others.

Speaking of Poe brings me neatly onto TWO EVIL EYES. I loved your segment but I found Romero's part very slow, what's your opinion of his sequence?

Romero wanted to make something similar to television, I think, because the timing was fifty minutes. Fifty minutes is a TV time... I think he was inspired by a story like Hitchcock tells or **THE TWILIGHT ZONE**, something like this... with no style composed, no eye.

Will you ever work with him again?

I think for a moment not, because I want to make another picture and George is also making a picture, **THE**

DARK HALF... I want to make an entire picture, no parts... I think for the next few years (laughs) we don't make a picture.

What is your next project?

My next project will be shot in Pittsburgh like **TWO EVIL EYES**. I was planning to shoot it in August or September but there was difficulty with the script, so maybe I start in November or December.

Okay, so what is the film called?

AURA'S ENIGMA is the name.

(At the time of writing Argento is trying to get James Spader for the lead. - Ed.)

Of your own films which one is your personal favourite?

My favourite... would be **OPERA**... I have more than one but **OPERA** is superior, very different.

Do you think that we will ever see the films that you have produced with Michele Soavi (THE CHURCH and THE SECT) on a British screen?

Yes... yes.

Do you like working with Michele?

Yes... he is a good director, he's also a nice person... (laughs) I am not really a good judge because he's a friend of mine and we have worked together for many years... he was my assistant before. We are good friends... his last picture was very good (**THE SECT**), maybe next year we produce another picture.

An Argento trademark is your stunning photography -



A classic poster for a classic Argento film

what are you trying to say with your camera?

I want the spirit of the picture to come out. I want the camera to be moving... psychological... every movement has a passive psychological reason. This is my camera, my photography... if I make a movement it's because the story suggests it.



The Ed meets Dario Argento at The Scala

ARGENTO FILMOGRAPHY

(with titles in English)

CEMETERY WITHOUT CROSSES (1967) - Story.
TODAY ME... TOMORROW YOU (1968) - Story and Screenplay. **ONE NIGHT AT DINNER** (1968) - Screenplay. **SEX REVOLUTION** (1968) - Story and Screenplay. **ZERO PROBABILITY** (1968) - Story and Screenplay. **COMMANDOS** (1969) - Story. **LEGION OF THE DAMNED** (1969) - Dialogue Supervisor. **SEASONS OF LOVE** (1969) - Story Supervisor. **ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST** (1969) - Story (with Sergio Leone & Bernardo Bertolucci). **FIVE MAN ARMY** (1970) - Story (with Marc Richards). **THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE** (1970) - Director and Screenplay. **THE CAT O'NINE TAILS** (1971) - Director, Story and Screenplay. **FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET** (1972) - Director, Screenplay and Story (with Luigi Cozzi & Mario Foglietti). **FIVE DAYS OF MILAN** (1973) - Director, Screenplay (with Vanni Balustrini) and Story (with Vincenzo Ungari & Luigi Cozzi). **DEEP RED** (1975) - Director and Screenplay (with Bernardo Zapponi). **SUSPIRIA** (1976) - Director, Screenplay (with Daria Nicolodi) and Music (in collaboration with The Goblins). **DAWN OF THE DEAD** (1978) - Co-Producer and Composer. **INFERNO** (1980) - Director and Screenplay. **TENEBRAE** (1982) - Director, Screenplay (with George Kemp) and Story. **PHENOMENA** (aka **CREEPERS**) (1985) - Director, Producer and Screenplay (with Franco Fraticelli). **DEMONS** (1986) - Producer. **DEMONS 2** (1987) - Producer. **OPERA** (aka **TERROR AT THE OPERA**) (1987) - Director, Producer, Screenplay (with Franco Ferrini) and based on his Story. **THE CHURCH** (1989) - Producer and Co-Screenplay (with Michele Soavi). **TWO EVIL EYES** (1990) - Co-Director (with George A. Romero) and Co-Producer (with Achille Manzotti). Argento's segment called 'The Black Cat'. **THE SECT** (1990) - Produced and Written.

Television

DOOR INTO DARKNESS (1972) - A series of films. Presented, Supervised. Argento wrote and Directed some episodes. **GIALLO** (1988) - A series. Producer.

Misc.

Directed a TV commercial for Fiat cars, **FIAT CROMA** (1987). Directed a fashion show for Trussardi. **TRUSSARDI ACTION** (1988).

Documentaries

DARIO ARGENTO'S WORLD OF HORROR (1985). **THE MAKING OF OPERA** (1987). **DARIO ARGENTO'S WORLD OF HORROR 2** (1991).

You've been referred to as the Italian Hitchcock, is that something you like?

No, it is not true... I'm not influenced by any directors, but I see some director's picture and I want to leave the theatre because I could get influenced. I do like Hitchcock and the gothic Italian films of the fifties and sixties, Bava, Margheriti and Freda... these people are maybe influencing me a little. I want to lead!

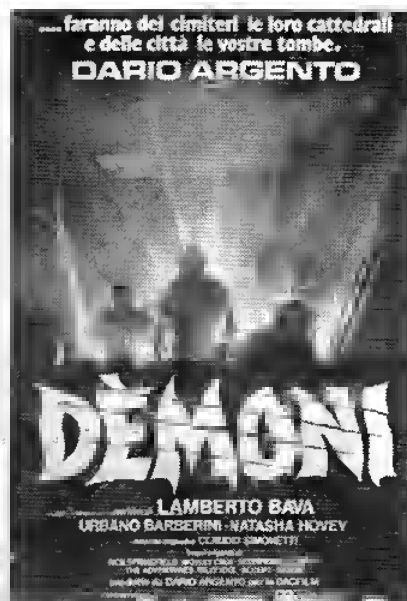
You are influencing many.

(laughs)

Will we ever get to see the final part of the '3 Mothers' trilogy?



PHENOMENA (aka CREEPERS)



DEMONS

Ah... I don't know... I wrote a terrible screenplay... no script, only subject... it was not satisfactory... I wait... I wait for the right moment.

How did you become involved with your 'Western' films in the early part of your career?

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST?

Yes, and FIVE MAN ARMY?

I was a friend of Sergio Leone, an old friend. I met him and we talked and got into a big conversation... and then Bernardo Bertolucci also got involved and the three of us together studied hard. Never in my life did I think I would write a western because those pictures were so far from my mind, very far. We saw JOHNNY GUITAR and THE SEARCHERS about six times... they were good.

You mentioned the great Mario Bava earlier, who did some effects work on INFERNO - would you have liked to have worked with him more?

Ah, yes, he was good but after INFERNO he died. However, his son was with me as an assistant, Lamberto Bava, and he knew many of his father's secrets... special effects, water effects, fog... wonderful movement... photography... he knew all these things.

Have you ever been tempted by the lure of Hollywood and the big money over in America?

No.

How do you rate American horror films?

At the moment I do not like them... the last two years have been disgusting, because most are ironic, comic, sarcastic and stupid... they are scared by the censor... the companies say 'no violence'... no, I don't like them especially the last two years... terrible!

You mentioned the censor then - how does it effect you when you find that your work has been butchered by the English censors?

Everywhere, also in Germany. I hope that something changes... people change... also young people push the power to the government to uplift the censor... the censor is like a middle-ages thing, like the inquisition... idiots... it's not dangerous... they are idiots. We are nearly at the year 2000 and still they are censoring pictures... oh, it's incredible.

Do you foresee any changes in 1992 when the European barriers come down?

Yes, I'm sure something will change. The law are starting

to compromise... I'm sure something will change... maybe in '94 or '95 we will change for the better. All Argento screen deaths are very grisly affairs - do you devise these yourself or are they a collaboration with your effects team?

A collaboration, yes.

When you go to the movies do you choose a horror film, a giallo...?

Everything... every nationality, especially something that is strange... from Africa, from the Far East.

Have you been happy with the British distributors of your films?

I only love the companies who don't cut my pictures... when no cuts, I love them... they are wonderful.

Do you know if there exists a fully uncut print of PROFONDO ROSSO (DEEP RED) in English?

I have an uncut print... the picture was complete, the cuts were made afterwards. I'm sure we have a perfect English version in Rome.

The only uncut print we've seen over here is in Italian.

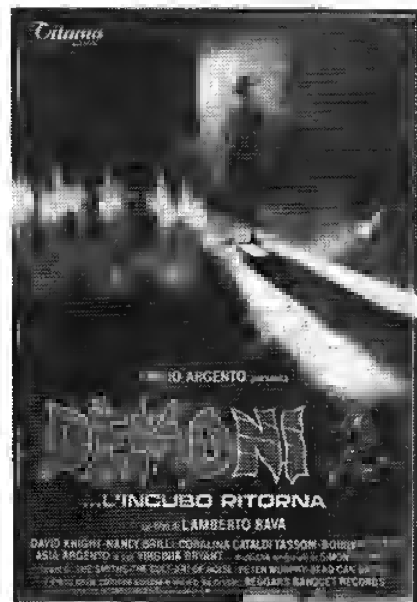
I have a complete English version... if you order a new copy we have it complete without cuts. Last week a French distributor bought the complete French version from us for release in October... the original version, two hours and ten minutes.

You worked with Tom Savini on TWO EVIL EYES, will you use him again?

Yes, absolutely.

At this point the interview was cut to a halt as the teaming legion of fans were awaiting Dario in the foyer for a strenuous signing session, but what did I care as I had certainly come away with more than I was expecting, and before we parted he took the time to personally inscribe my prized copy of the new book, which I urge you to track down as it makes for a fascinating and intelligent read (published by Sun Tavern Fields. ISBN 0951701207. £15.00. H/B).

Sincere thanks go to Alan Jones, Anthony (the publisher of the book) and, of course, Dario Argento for making it all possible.



DEMONS 2

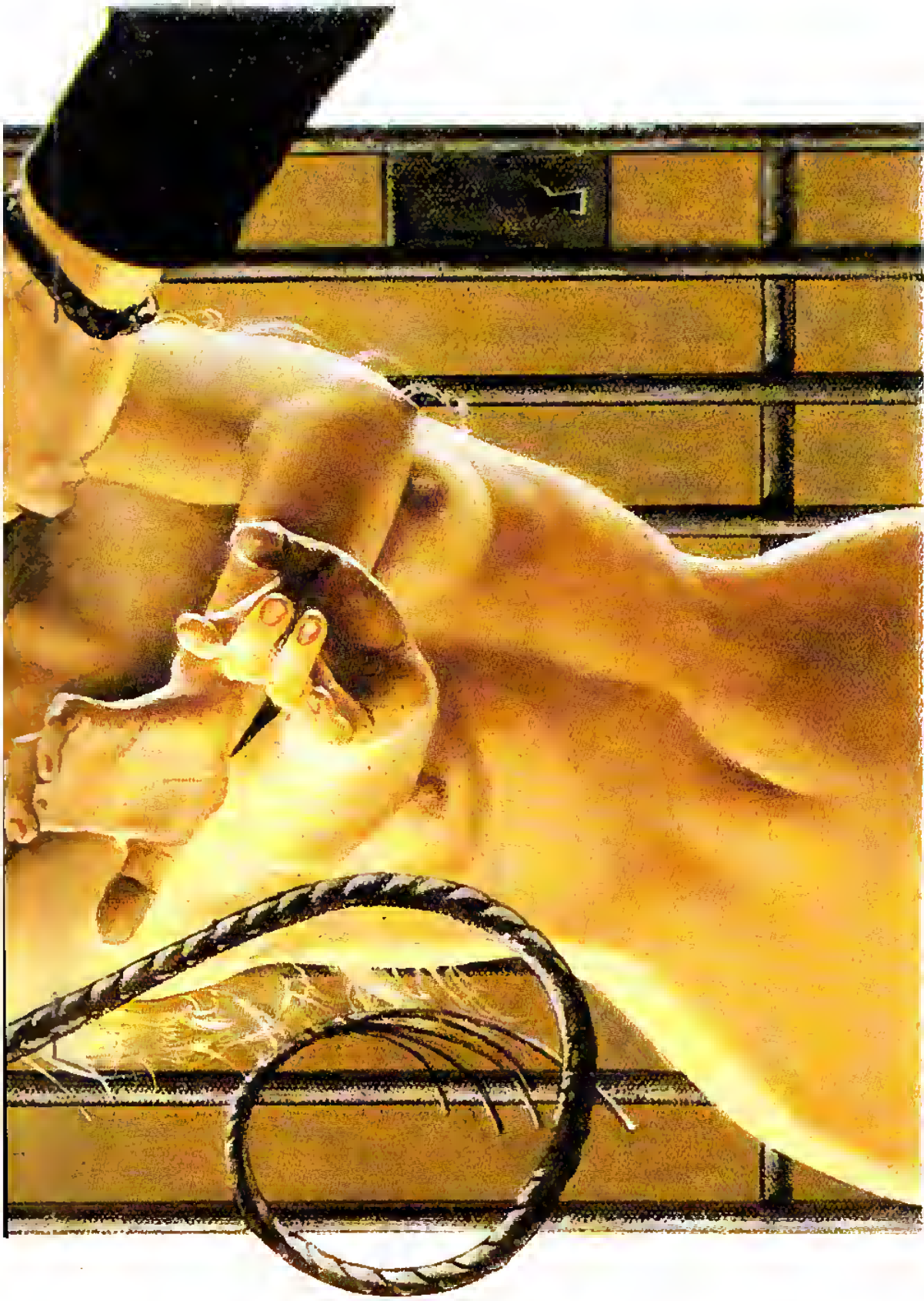


**MANY YOUNG GIRLS HAVE
ENTERED . . .
NONE HAVE YET COME OUT!**

HOUSE OF HORRORS

X 18





A PETE WALKER PRODUCTION starring

BARBARA MARKHAM PATRICK BARR

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FANTASYNOPSIS

THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASTIC FILMS & VISCERAL VIDEOS

BOOKWORM

REVIEWS OF THE PRINTED PAGE

JOE BOB GOES TO THE DRIVE-IN by JOE BOB BRIGGS

(Penguin Books, 1990, Paperback : £5.99)

For those who don't already know, Joe Bob Briggs is the creation of American film critic John Bloom as an outlet for his views on drive-in movies (as opposed to "indoor bullstuff") and this volume is a compilation of his syndicated column written for the 'Dallas Herald Times', covering the period 1982-5.

After an Introduction from Joe Bob's number one fan Stephen King, along with background information on the history of the drive-in and Joe Bob himself (including his 'rules to live by', no.4 being: "I am opposed to power-drills through the ear, machetes through the stomach, decapitation with barbed-wire, flamethrower attacks, and mutilation with ball peen (sic) hammer, unless it's necessary for the plot") we come to Joe Bob's unique style of film reviewing along with an equally unique rating system which is less concerned with the quality of the performances, direction, etc. than with the more important matter of how many "nekkid garbonzas" (bare breasts) are on show, the amount and variety of severed limbs and other body parts, types of kung-fu and number of car smashes; thus the review for *KRULL* ends like this: "Heads roll in this one. We're talking seventy-seven corpses. Half a quart of blood. No breasts. Several varieties of beast, but the main Beast is blurry. No motor vehicle chases. Minimum kung-fu. Several swords through bodies. Most of the world gets blown up. Excellent torture chamber. I'm calling it three stars. Joe Bob says check it out."

Not having seen the films under discussion is no handicap to enjoying the reviews as they're often more entertaining than the actual films, and in some cases it's probably better if you haven't seen the film; for instance, would you recognise *CANNONBALL RUN 2* from this description: "Two breasts. Half a pint of blood. One beast (Telly Savalas). Two solid hours of motor vehicle chases. Five automobile crashes. One Marlon Brando imitation. One levitating car. One underwater car. Every guest on the Carson show for the last twenty years except David Brenner. Great kung-fu. Monkey-fu. Some bimbo-fu. Monkey drives a limo. Four brawls. One little old lady thrown through a plate glass window. One trailer-house crash. Arab jokes. Jap jokes. Sammy wears all his jewelry (sic). Three stars. Joe Bob says check it out." Joe Bob also finds time to introduce us to friends and acquaintances such as Wanda Bodine, Cherry Dilday and even Ugly on a Stick! While we're also treated to a selection of the letters sent to the 'Dallas Herald Times' by incensed readers (including some irate feminists who should be ashamed at rising to such obvious bait), all easily dispatched with witty retorts from Joe Bob.

So it's fun all the way then? Well unfortunately, and predictably, it all gets a bit tiresome after a while due to the repetitiveness of the reviews. This isn't necessarily Joe Bob's fault as the replies to those letters (plus occasional pieces for Radio 4's 'Loose Ends' here in the UK) prove that John Bloom has a keen sense of humour, rather it's a lack of imagination (and/or talent) on the part of the makers of most of these films that so limits Joe Bob's response. One way to combat this would be to limit yourself to one review per week as originally printed/

intended. But there's a far more serious flaw with the book and that's the fact that it doesn't have any sort of index so without reading the whole thing (and keeping notes) you don't even know if a particular film is covered let alone what page it might be on. For this reason alone the book can't be a recommended purchase, rather it's one to borrow on a read and return basis from your local library.

As the reviews end in 1985 (when Joe Bob was finally sacked by the 'Dallas Herald Times', although he did continue with his column in other papers) I guess we can expect another volume at some stage when the inclusion of an index would certainly make it a far more attractive proposition.

Meanwhile, with this volume already out of date and having only limited long-term value, those who share Joe Bob's fixation with bare breasts and severed limbs would be far better advised to take out a year's subscription to the highly irreverent Reverend Rick Sullivan's goodly great GORE GAZETTE (address in 'HAVE YOU ZINE IT?') where the pithy reviews have all the gory details, plus the full gen on which former TV starlet has been reduced to shedding her clothes this week, and are never boring!

MARK MURTON.

STARE BACK AND SMILE by JOANNA LUMLEY

(Penguin Books, 1990, Paperback : £3.99)

In a time when even the most minor of celebrities (i.e. anyone who ever kicked a football for a living) feels compelled to inflict their life story upon us, it's a real pleasure to find an autobiography from a genuine star and one with the wit and intelligence to present their story in such an entertaining fashion.

Potential readers shouldn't be alienated by the 'her



The lovely Joanna does us proud

dazzling memoirs" inscription on the cover which might lead them to expect a somewhat precious, or even pretentious, approach because it is in fact a highly readable, immensely enjoyable account of an always interesting life told with a nice line in self-deprecating humour.

Missing are the self-indulgences of many autobiographers as, instead, we are presented with a vivid picture of life growing up in India, being educated at an all-girl English boarding-school, and finding work as a model in swinging sixties London; alongside tales of her struggle first to find work and then respect as an actress, the trials and tribulations of a uniquely troubled film career (dying before the opening credits in her first film, films made but never released, films released that should have stayed hidden, etc.) and the frustrations of always finding herself playing "the girlfriend" in endless TV sit-coms, before finally getting her big break in **THE NEW AVENGERS**.

All of this is allied to a wealth of interesting tidbits about the people she encountered along the way - just why did David Puttnam grow that beard? Why did Peter Cushing always wear one white glove between takes on **THE SATANIC RITES OF DRACULA**? And which farmyard animal did photographers most often compare her to? - but imparted with warmth rather than the malice so often displayed in works of this sort.

Add in 24 pages of largely unfamiliar photographs and you've got a great book.

If the book has a fault it's that there's simply too much information to fit all in one, 271 page, volume, the last few chapters especially could easily have made up a good start of a second volume, so let's hope there's another in the pipeline.

Perhaps this isn't the book for you if you're looking for the sort of autobiography that reveals the exact time and location the subject lost their virginity (if anything there's a little too much reticence over her relationships with the opposite sex, to the extent that son James arrives almost like a virgin birth!), or one that dishes the dirt on fellow professionals (the nearest Ms. Lumley comes is with a straightforward telling of the excesses of Blake Edwards when making the post-Peter Sellers **PINK PANTHER** films), but to anyone else I have no hesitation in recommending it unreservedly.

NEW AVENGERS fans beware though, those stocking-tops shots of Purdew at the launch of the series will never look the same again!

MARK MURTON.

RITUAL IN THE DARK by COLIN WILSON

(Grafton Books, 1991, Paperback : £4.99)

It's strange isn't it? The moment one decides to review a long out of print book, it suddenly appears back in print! (Isn't it strange? The moment one decides to review a film of a Colin Wilson book, along comes two reviews of his books!). Ed.) First published in 1960 by Victor Gollancz, then by Panther in '76 and now by Grafton in '91. The latest edition has a most misleading blurb on the back cover, "Colin Wilson's classic novel of a serial killer on the hunt"... **'RITUAL IN THE DARK'** is in fact the start of a trilogy about the character Gerard Sorme - a young writer who meets Austin Nunne at an art gallery. They become good friends and in turn Nunne introduces him to more friends: Gertrude Quincey, a Jehovah's Witness, who happens to have a most attractive niece, a priest, Father Carruthers, and Oliver Glasp, a highly strung Van-Gogh-like artist with a big interest in crime. At the same time a maniac killer is loose on the Whitechapel streets of London with women, mainly prostitutes, found brutally murdered.

Sorme becomes fascinated in the search for the killer after an old man living in the room above him is arrested on suspicion of being the killer. His interest develops further after he visits the scene of a double-murder... It seems that he has a strange connection with the Whitechapel murderer.

Extremely detailed, excellent characters, highly recommended.

Special note for trivia buffs: the original working title for this book was 'Ritual of the Dead'.

The other two Sorme books are titled **'THE SEX DIARY OF GERARD SORME'** and **'GOD OF THE LABYRINTH'**. STEFAN KWATKOWSKI.

HAVE YOU ZINE IT

continued from page 26

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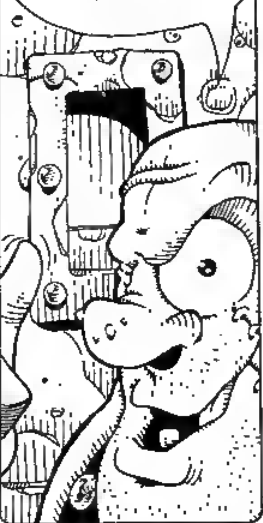
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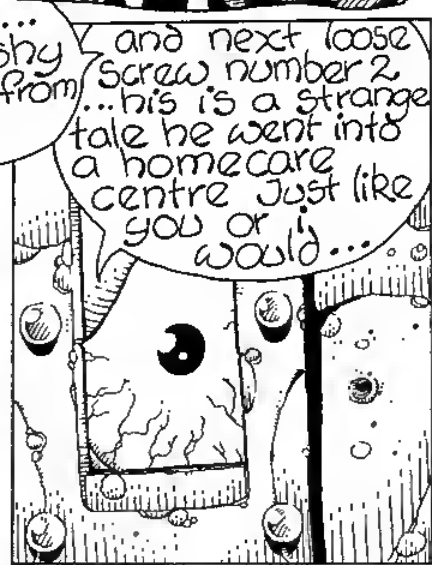
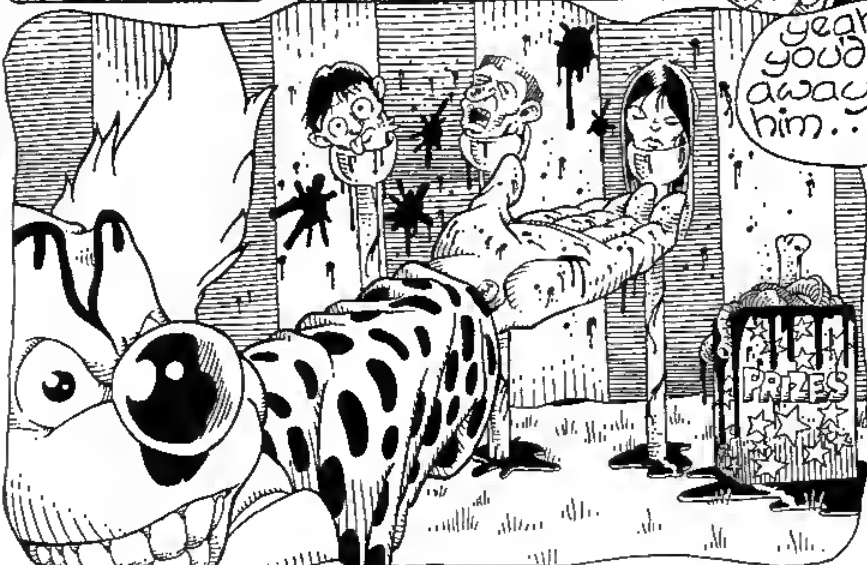


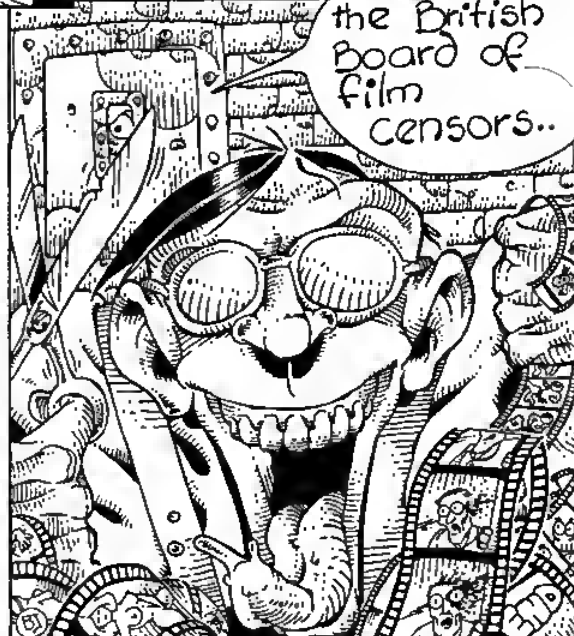
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said that 2 years ago
when he was creating
his "Carnage carnival".
Killed 17 teenagers, just
to make his coconut
stall..



yeah...
you'd shy
away from
him...

and next loose
screw number 2
...his is a strange
tale he went into
a home care
centre just like
you or
would...







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Fantasynopsis presents a detailed look at the largely ignored Frank Langella/John Badham adaptation of **DRACULA**

SYNOPSIS

England 1913: A sailing ship, the *Demeter*, arriving from Varna with a cargo of coffin-sized wooden crates, each marked "Count Dracula, Whitby, Yorkshire, England", is battling through a raging storm just off the Yorkshire coast. Only the captain and two crewmen remain alive, but as one of them tries to push another of the crates overboard a hand smashes out of the box and rips his throat out. Moments later a red-eyed wolf prowls the deck.

A cliff-top house, Billerbeck Hall, looks like it might offer some sanctuary from the storm but inside it is a literal bedlam, for this is the local asylum run by Dr. Seward, aided by a small staff and his daughter Lucy.

In her room, Lucy and her friend Mina Van Helsing, visiting from Holland, sit talking, seemingly unconcerned by the storm until a window blows open, startling them both. As the inmates grow more frenzied, Lucy is called away to help try and calm them. Alone in the room, Mina tries to sleep but she finds herself drawn to the window where she watches transfixed as the ship moves inexorably towards disaster. Seemingly hypnotised, Mina, barefoot and dressed only in her nightdress, is drawn outside and traverses the treacherous cliff paths down to the beach. As she gets to the beach the ship is breaking up on the rocks close to the shore and she sees the red-eyed wolf alight the ship and slope away to nearby caves. Mina follows it inside and soon comes across an

unconscious man wrapped in a fur coat. As she examines him for signs of life his hand closes around hers...

At daylight the locals are busy salvaging what they can from the beach by the wreck while the police stand guard by the ship as Dr. Seward explores the deck. A car comes speeding along the beach, driven by Jonathan Harker, a London solicitor who is representing Count Dracula while he stays in England as well as being Lucy Seward's suitor. Harker joins Dr. Seward on deck and is horrified by the sight of the Captain, still lashed to the wheel with his rosary in his hand and with his throat ripped out. They are also surprised to learn that the wooden crates all contain earth.

The only survivor from the wreck is the man found by Mina - Count Dracula himself. He has been invited to dine at the Hall that evening and Harker is duly invited too. Meanwhile at Carfax Abbey, a majestic but dilapidated old building leased by Dracula for his stay in England, Renfield, a former owner of the Abbey and now the Count's hired hand, is busy dragging the remainder of the heavy, earth-filled wooden crates inside the building. As he drags the last of them up the steep steps, Dracula awakes to give him his reward: he attacks him in the form of a bat, sending him crashing down the steps and knocking him unconscious.

Dracula then joins the other diners, Dr. Seward,

Lucy, Mina and Harker, at Billerbeck Hall. Mina is completely taken by the Count, entranced by his good looks and easy charm, but the self-assured Lucy seems more resistant to his charms. While carving the joint, Swayles, one of the staff at the hall, cuts his finger and the Count is barely able to contain his excitement; and later, when the fragile Mina faints, Dracula is quick to attend to her, forcefully insisting that her blood should not be polluted by the administration of any drugs. Mina recovers and the evening continues with even Lucy succumbing to the Count's allure, and she ends the evening dancing in his arms.

That night, as Mina sleeps, Lucy slips away for a liaison with Jonathan. Alone in the room, Mina hears a scratching at the window and sees Dracula, who has crawled down the wall to reach her room, removing a small pane of glass so he can reach in and open the window. Once inside he advances on the frightened but strangely excited Mina, and as he reaches the bed she starts to unbutton her nightdress...

By the time Lucy returns to the room Dracula has gone and Mina sleeps soundly. Back at Carfax Abbey, Renfield awakes and is consumed by a raging thirst, but unable to find any water he settles for devouring a handy insect and is then started to find that the Count has returned and is standing over him...

The next morning Lucy is awoken by the sound of Mina gasping for air. She quickly elicits her father's help but there is nothing they can do and they stand and watch, helpless as the life ebbs from Mina's fragile frame.

Examining the body they find two small puncture marks on her neck, Dr. Seward now sends for Mina's father, Professor Van Helsing, from Holland.

Harker has a meeting with Dracula at the Abbey and on the return journey he is attacked by a terrified Renfield who has hidden in the back of the car, almost causing a crash before Harker is able to overpower him - all this happens under the watchful gaze of a bat hanging in a nearby tree.

Renfield is taken back to Billerbeck Hall where he is incarcerated with the other lunatics. Meanwhile Mina is buried in the cliff-top graveyard by the hall.

With Professor Van Helsing due to arrive from Holland, Dr. Seward goes to Whitby train station to collect him while Lucy prefers to keep a pre-arranged dinner appointment with the Count at Carfax Abbey.

As Dracula works his seductive powers on Lucy over dinner a horrific attack occurs at the Hall where one of the inmates has her baby snatched and killed. When Dr. Seward and Professor Van Helsing arrive at the Hall they find the woman insisting that the attacker was none other than Mina!

Disturbed by this prospect, Professor Van Helsing stays up all night reading books about the supernatural.

In the morning the Professor visits Mina's grave where he is joined by Lucy, here he gives her a crucifix, insisting that she wears it at all times. While they are there Dracula rides up to pay his respects.

That night, having noted the reaction of Dracula's horse while in the graveyard, Professor Van Helsing and Dr. Seward return to the graveyard with a white horse, hoping its reaction to the graves will inform them where the undead resides. Alone in her room Lucy removes the crucifix. As Renfield watches the events at the cemetery from an asylum window, the horse rears up at Mina's grave confirming the professor's worst fears. The red-eyed wolf is also an interested spectator as Van Helsing and Dr. Seward start to dig open the grave. Reaching the coffin they find it empty, then the professor discovers that the side of the coffin has been broken out, allowing access to the network of mine tunnels that run under the whole town. Against Seward's advice, Professor Van Helsing ventures down...

Dracula now pays Lucy a night-time visit and without the crucifix to deter him he seduces her.

Searching the underground tunnels, Professor Van Helsing has a frightening encounter with his undead daughter who attacks him and he is only saved by the timely intervention of Dr. Seward who has followed him underground.

As the Professor and Dr. Seward return from the Hall they find Harker in Lucy's room, concerned that she is ill. No longer in any doubt that there is a vampire in their midst, they give Lucy an immediate blood transfusion. Exhausted by his night's work, the Professor retires to his room where he encounters the Count. A struggle ensues where Dracula displays his powers, but Van Helsing manages to fend him off and turning into a wolf once more Dracula disappears into the night.

Van Helsing knows that to save his daughter's soul her heart must be cut out and despite protests from Harker, silenced by showing him that Mina has no reflection, the deed is carried out. Lucy watches from her window, and with the men otherwise occupied takes the opportunity to slip away to join Dracula at Carfax Abbey.

Realising she has gone, Harker, the Professor and Dr. Seward give chase in Harker's car and head her off before she gets there. They take her back to the Hall and lock her in a room for her own protection.

Harker and the Professor now travel to the Abbey to confront Dracula, but on his own territory he proves too



Langella and Nelligan



Now you see her, now you don't - Pleasence, Olivier and Eve gaze upon Jan Francis

strong for them and is able to escape.

That night Dracula comes to the Hall to claim his bride, and in the confusion caused by his ruthless dispatching of Renfield manages to steal her away.

Harker, the Professor and Dr. Seward chase after them in the car but seem to have lost them. Then, as they are about to return to the Hall, they see a wagon carrying one of Dracula's boxes of earth and learning that it is bound for Scarborough docks, set off in pursuit once again.

More problems en route result in their not arriving until after the ship, the brigantine *Csarina Ekaterina*, has already sailed. Leaving Dr. Seward on shore in case Dracula isn't on board, Harker and Professor Van Helsing hire a boat to take them out to the ship for the final confrontation with the Prince of Darkness and his chosen bride...

(Trivia Note: In his synopsis of the film's opening scenes printed in 'FAMOUS MONSTERS' No. 157 (Sept. 1979), Forrest J. Ackerman includes a scene where Lucy follows Mina out onto the cliffs, but as she passes through the graveyard, with graves collapsing in on themselves all around her in the storm, she slips and falls into one of the newly opened graves and by the time she has scrambled out Mina has disappeared from sight - but as this scene is no longer in the release print it was obviously cut after preview screenings.)

REVIEW

Raising the Count

A full ten years after it was made, John Badham's film of the legend of Count Dracula was placed at the top of a poll of 'The All-Time Top Ten Vampire Movies' conducted among the members of the Vampire Society of Great Britain for *ITOLDS* magazine (No. 11, Dec/Jan 1988/9), while a similar poll conducted among the readers of *STARBURST* in 1988, and printed in the Winter 1988/9 Special, made it the second favourite Dracula film, placing it at No. 7 after a Count-less top four, with the only other film featuring Dracula in the top seven being Christopher Lee's interpretation of the Count in Hammer's 1958 *DRACULA* at No. 5. (The vagaries of such a poll meant that *STARBURST* readers also placed Badham's *DRACULA* at No. 5 among the 'Worst Vampire Films' - equal with *LIFEFORCE* as it happens! (Now, steady on! - Ed.))

Yet despite this apparent continued popularity, plus its generally good reviews and box-office performance upon

release, it has remained, for twelve years now, Hollywood's most recent attempt to present the Count to contemporary audiences; but with Francis Ford Coppola currently preparing to film a new version of the story - after casting suggestions including Jeremy Irons and Jack Nicholson for the title role, it seems, at the time of writing, that Gary Oldman is set to play the Count opposite Winona Ryder with Anthony Hopkins as Professor Van Helsing - this is clearly set to change so now seems an appropriate time to take a look back at the 1979 *DRACULA* before it passes into the annals of Dracula lore.

Producer Walter Mirisch was convinced that a new version of Dracula was a viable proposition after seeing the Broadway stage production featuring Frank Langella in the lead role, and the man he wanted as director for this new version, John Badham (still "hot" after the mega-

The play itself, written by Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston, dates back to 1927 and in its turn was based on Bram Stoker's world-renowned, best-selling (it's never been out of print) novel penned in 1897.

Despite acting in the stage version over 400 times, to ecstatic reviews and audiences, Frank Langella needed little convincing to continue his association with the Count on celluloid - mirroring the path taken by Bela Lugosi who also had a successful run in the play before recreating the role in a film version (and also for Universal films) - although Langella did insist that his Dracula shouldn't have fangs dripping with blood.

Perhaps John Badham wasn't the obvious choice to helm this big-budget entry in the horror genre, it was only his third feature film, after the aforementioned *SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER* and his first, the much less successful *THE BINGO-LONG TRAVELLING ALL-STARS AND MOTOR KINGS*. Prior to this he'd had a very successful, twice Emmy-nominated career as a television director, working on various shows as well as seven late-movies (one of which was the excellent *ISN'T IT SHOCKING?*, which does have a flavour of fantasy to it), but he did bring plenty of enthusiasm to the project and while Langella continued to perform in the play, Badham worked in close association with scriptwriter W. D. Richter (who had scripted the re-make of *INVASION OF THE BODY-SNATCHERS* the previous year) on the screenplay, continuing throughout part of the Winter and Spring of 1978, ripping the play apart and returning to the source novel for inspiration as well as adding a few refinements of their own, some of which would prove controversial.

At the same time other aspects of the production were being put together with production designer Peter Murton (no relation - whose previous credits included art direction on *DR. STRANGELOVE*) and costume designer Julie Harris (who had designed the costumes for *ROLLERBALL* as well as being an Oscar winner for *DARLING* in 1965) being issued with strict instructions that they were to work within a colour range of muted blacks, greys and whites to capture the romantic feel of original pen and ink drawings of the period (later, cinematographer Gil Taylor, whose work included *THE OMEN* and *STAR WARS*, would be given the same instruction). Other key behind-the-scenes personnel contracted included matte artist Albert Whitlock, a legend in the industry where he had worked since 1929, whose skills were so specialised that he had to be coaxed out of retirement (again) to furnish the eleven mattes that would

prove so vital to achieving the 1913 look of the film, and special effects man Roy Arbogast who had the task of injecting some modern gore-effects into this classic tale to give it extra appeal to the late 1970's audiences.

Meanwhile an impressive cast was being assembled to compliment the talents of Frank Langella. Including Kate Nelligan who, like Langella, had only limited film experience but had won rave reviews for her stage work (aspecially in the plays of David Hare), plus several faces new to film but with extensive experience on television, such as Jan Francis and Trevor Eve, and they were all backed up by presence of some reliable old hands like Donald Pleasence and, representing perhaps the biggest coup, Lord Laurence Olivier.

Frank Langella gave his last stage performance as Dracula on Sunday, October 15th, 1978 and flew straight to England for



"I am Dracula, I bid you welcome"

success of his previous film *SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER*, was equally convinced once he too had attended the play - "The play's terrible, Frank is terrific", he opined - returning four times as he gauged audience reaction to Langella's charismatic performance (this reportedly included women fainting during the show and long queues backstage to meet the star).

the start of filming the following day. Principal photography involved a twelve week shooting schedule, including location work that began in Tintagel in Cornwall and continued at St. Michael's Mount and Mevagissey (also both in Cornwall), though all doubling as the Yorkshire of the film's setting, as well as utilising some forty interior and exterior sets; with these interior sets taking up four



Count Dracula gives Harker a demonstration of his power

stages at Shepperton studios in Middlesex and another two at the studios at Twickenham.

Filming continued throughout the rest of 1978 and into 1979, finally wrapping in mid-February. Once the first cut was complete the film was taken to composer John Williams who had been commissioned almost a year before to write the music for the film. No stranger to writing for genre films, Williams had already composed scores for *JAWS*, *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND*, *STAR WARS* and *SUPERMAN - THE MOVIE* (winning Oscars for the first and third of these), and he viewed the film every morning for a week in early March 1979, gradually putting the score together until it was ready to be recorded in May 1979, played by the London Symphony Orchestra.

The finished film was finally ready for release in September of 1979 and was launched with the sort of backing only a major studio can supply - full page press ads, souvenir brochure, official movie magazine, paperback reprint of the book illustrated with stills from the film, soundtrack album (and it even inspired a short-lived magazine entitled *DRACULA '79*) - and despite being sandwiched between two other vampire film releases, the comedy-horror *LOVE AT FIRST BITE*, released earlier in the year and a considerable commercial success, and Werner Herzog's USA-funded re-make of *NOSFERATU*, plus some mixed critical opinions (see "What the Press Said") it did well at the box-office, eventually showing a healthy profit.

If John Badham wasn't the most obvious choice to direct this new version of *DRACULA* then any doubts about his suitability are immediately dispelled by his handling of the film's opening scene of the shipwreck, which also lets us know we're in for a big-budget spectacular with no expense spared on the special effects - this first scene involving the positioning of a full-size wreck on the Cornish coast. Other examples of Badham's impressive direction include the scene where Dracula attacks Renfield in the form of a bat, with the bat swooping down a steep flight of stairs towards him, all viewed from over the back of the bat and with the bat and Renfield both in shot the whole time (this involved using a 30-foot crane and some ingenious camera work), and the scene where Lucy visits the Count at Carfax Abbey for the first time, viewed from a high vantage point through a spider's web with the spider advancing across the web as Lucy comes further into the room (a fairly obvious metaphor but an impressive shot nonetheless).

The opening of the film also gives an early indication of how Badham and Richter tinker with the conventions of vampire lore to confound our expectations, namely the post-wreck shot of the ship's Captain lashed to the wheel with his rosary, a traditional vampire deterrent, in his hand but with his throat ripped out all the same. Another example of the limited effect the cross has on Dracula occurs when Van Helsing and Harker confront the Count at Carfax Abbey, rested and on his own territory, Dracula

is able to seize the cross Harker is brandishing and cause it to burst into flames. Other changes affected by Badham and Richter include having Professor Van Helsing as a grieving father confronting evil as a reaction to his daughter's death rather than in his traditional role as master vampire hunter (a change applauded by many critics) and then at the end, in a change that had some critics in apoplexy, having Van Helsing killed by the Count who hurfs him across the ship, causing him to be impaled on his own stake!

It's also clear from the start that the instructions given to Peter Murton, Julie Harris and Gil Taylor have been followed to the letter, giving the film a striking, distinctive look and creating the desired romantic mood. Peter Murton's production designs are a highlight of the film, particularly the interiors of Carfax Abbey, Dracula's castle, matching the natural splendour of St. Michael's Mount which provided the Abbey's exteriors; along with Julie Harris' superbly realised costume designs which, as she told *PHOTOPLAY* in their 1980 Year Book, involved "... about ten costumes... We wanted to give him (Dracula) a romantic, almost Byronic look. The story takes place around 1907, but we didn't want the costumes to be of any identifiable period...; and it's all beautifully captured by Gil Taylor's sumptuous cinematography.

Equally important to the overall look of the film are Albert Whitlock's magnificent matte paintings, necessary because although the villages in the locations used had changed little since the turn of the century they were all dotted with television aerials and telephone lines, and so good are they as to be virtually undetectable - a prime example being, on close inspection, the scene where Lucy tries to reach Dracula's castle while the men are otherwise occupied at Mina's grave; the shot shows Lucy in a coach in the foreground on the road heading for the castle in the background and the sun setting in the sky, yet only the coach and a short section of the road and surroundings are real, the rest of the intricately detailed shot comprising Whitlock's matte work.

Not only is the film a visual feast, but thanks to another classy, classical John Williams score which adds greatly to the romantic atmosphere of the film and really should have brought him what would have then been his fourteenth Oscar nomination, it's also an aural one.

With such a strong team behind the cameras it called for equally strong performances from the cast to stop them being swamped by the other aspects of the production and happily, to a large extent, this is what it got. Obviously the film stands or falls on the strength of Frank Langella's central performance in the title role and he responds with a commanding, charismatic portrayal of the Count that combines with his smouldering looks to give the piece exactly the romantic feel Badham was striving for. Langella presents us with an altogether more sophisticated Count than we usually see on screen, one who is fully in command of himself and the situations he finds himself in (only at the very end, when he realises that he is undone,

what the press said:

"... what it lacks in horror the film compensates with romance and atmosphere, embodied in Frank Langella's portrayal of the Count. Badham's gift for capturing the general mood of the story is well matched with his skill when it comes to the film's varying special effects... A different kind of Dracula movie, but very entertaining." - *PHOTOPLAY*

"(Langella) gives a stunning performance of sheer hypnotic sensuality. Apart from great performances *DRACULA* exudes a tremendous atmosphere. It is greatly to John Badham's credit that he can completely hold our attention with a story told so many times." - *FILM REVIEW*

"(Langella) plays as straight as stern Stoker traditionalists could wish. He is remarkably good at the task, and Badham's firm direction is good too." - *Gordon Cow / FILMS & FILMING*

"John Badham's plush new film, alas, goes for overt horror and stylised Gothic, and falls fairly comprehensively between the two approaches, which obstinately refuse to blend. What the film lacks above all, though, is impact... It's strange that one can find so little good to say about a film that isn't all that bad. Badham has missed nothing but inspiration." - *David Quinlan / FILMS ILLUSTRATED*

"The new *DRACULA* is a triumphantly lurid creation that seems bound to be either under-valued for its circus effects or over-valued for the stylishness with which it steers between the reefs of camp theatrical indulgence." - *Richard Combe / MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN*

"There is no point in retelling this tale if you're going to be stuffy about it" - *TIME*

"*DRACULA* inevitably suffers... because of unhealthy ties with the past. What remains is only an opportunity for stylish pomp... (The) glimpses of Gothic imagery in Badham's direction are frequently creative... Langella's portrayal is interesting and different, but it is not good. Seeing how anaemic it is, this screen version of *DRACULA* is not much worth biting into." - *Jeffrey Frentzen / CINEFANTASTIQUE*

"(*DRACULA*) is a gourmet's delight, a tasteful and sumptuous portrait of gothic romanticism textured in the richest, most lavish hues. Frank Langella (gives) a superb and captivating interpretation that is haunting and unforgettable... Despite its sometimes maddening lapses of integrity, *DRACULA* remains a vividly beautiful film" - *Steve Vertlieb / CINEMACABRE*

"A lush, expensive and romantic version which presents the Count as a matinee idol and spends too much time on the romantic scenes to distract attention from an old story." - *HALLIWELL'S FILM GUIDE*

"Murky retelling of Bram Stoker classic, with Langella's acclaimed Broadway characterisation lost amid trendy horror gimmicks..." - *LEONARD MALTIN'S TV MOVIES AND VIDEO GUIDE*

does he lose this self-control as he rages and howls like a wild animal). Langella's performance is matched by that of Kate Nelligan as the strong-willed Lucy, remaining elegant and beautiful while bringing a touch of modern feminism to the early 1900's. Unfortunately, Lucy's strength of character does mean that the character of Jonathan Harker comes across as quite ineffectual in comparison, not helped by Trevor Eve's failure to impose himself on the part and he presents a rather bland Harker. Donald Pleasence gives a far more restrained showing than in some more recent outings and is all the more effective for it; but sadly the same can't be said for Tony Haygarth who as Renfield chews up the scenery at every opportunity along with any unsuspecting insect that strays too close! Far better is Jan Francis whose sympathetic portrayal of the unfortunate Mina, allied to her vulnerable beauty (which is disguised from the start by pallid make-

up, described as being "like cold porridge" and which brought her out in a rash, to heighten Mina's fragility, and deteriorates rapidly after her night-time visit from the Count) makes her ideal for the part, while she also successfully makes the transition to a foul creature of the undead. The casting coup involved in acquiring the services of Lord Olivier was somewhat tempered by the fact of his ill health at the time of filming, along with the decision to saddle him with a ridiculous pseudo-Dutch accent ("Verevoves and vampires") which leaves his Professor Van Helsing constantly treading a thin line between character and caricature; but Olivier knows his craft too well to ever truly disappoint and all his skills come to the fore in the scene where he stakes his (un)dead daughter in the underground mine tunnels, responding to her pitiful cries of "Papa" with his own anguished wailing as he realises what he has done. Ironically, where Olivier's frailty could have been put to good use as a demonstration of the effects of a lifetime fighting evil in his role as master vampire hunter, the decision had already been taken at the script-writing stage to have Van Helsing as an ordinary man, with only a passing knowledge of the supernatural, reacting to the situation he found himself in and so it just becomes unfortunate - Olivier's fatherly relationship with his screen daughter Jan Francis continued off-screen when, as she told 'Woman's Weekly' in March 1984, during the filming of scenes on the windswept Cornish cliffs where Oliver sat wrapped in blankets between takes, he invited her over and wrapping her in the blankets with him proceeded to "... whisper really naughty limericks in my ear for at least half-an-hour!" The critics weren't all sure what to make of Olivier's performance, while some were (over) respectful simply because of his reputation (i.e. Jeffrey Frentzen in CINEFANTASTIQUE Vol 9 No. 1, who rubbished almost every other aspect of the film but told us that it was left to Olivier to "deliver the one strong lead performance"), others took great delight in having this chance to shoot him down (such as David Quinlan in his review in the Sept. 1979 FILMS ILLUSTRATED who dubbed him "Professor Van Hamming"). Langella received almost universal praise and Kate Nelligan and Jan Francis, when they rated a mention, also got mostly kind words.

So assembling such a uniformly good cast of (mainly) British talent guaranteed good performances throughout (well almost), although from a UK point of view the over familiarity of some of the faces through their extensive work on television here - Jan 'Just Good Friends' Francis, Trevor 'Shoestring' Eve, Teddy 'Coronation Street' Turner and even a future DR. WHO in Sylvester McCoy - does perhaps detract from their effectiveness, but to be fair this is only a retrospective opinion because at the time much



Out for the count... but not for long!

audience who had already met Michael Myers and would soon be introduced to the likes of Freddy and Jason. This task was placed in the capable hands of Roy Arbogast whose work is featured right from the start with the ship's crew having their throats ripped out in gruesomely realistic fashion, and goes on to include (highly impressive) mechanical bats and wolves, a continuous shot where Dracula leaps through a window and turns into a wall before he lands on the ground (achieved by the use of a split screen and a rather reluctant woff), and work that required a cast of actor Tony Haygarth's head and a full-body cast of Frank Langella for his final melt down - a scene that took fourteen hours to film, with Langella being hoisted high in the ship's rigging and brought down periodically to have the make-up for the next stage of his deterioration applied - although in the released version this was cut considerably to allow for the possibility that Dracula had survived (the film ends on an ambiguous note with the count, or is it just his cape?, floating away on the wind towards the horizon as his bride, Lucy, gives an enigmatic smile), leaving the way open for a possible sequel.

But the most remarkable effect has to be the one where, all in one shot, Mina is propelled across the underground tunnel and impaled on the stake held by her father. This was achieved by Jan Francis wearing a special bell that had the pointed end of the stake, fashioned from foam rubber which could be inflated by an air hose from off-screen, at the back and a protective pad at the front, while the stake held by Olivier was telescopic and made of rubber and collapsible steel so when Mina falls onto it it appears to penetrate her stomach and at the same time the back of the stake is inflated, add a bit of stage blood and the appropriate sound effect and the result is totally convincing.

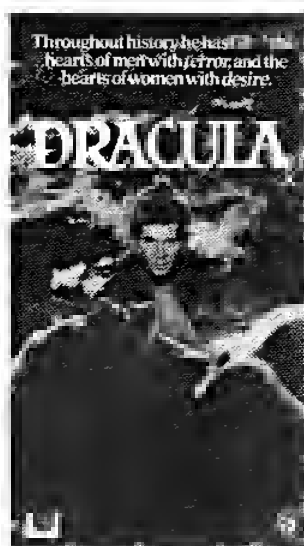
While such gore pleased many critics thought it too explicit and out of step with the rest of the film, but as Badham confided to FANTASTIC FILMS (UK issue 4) the level of violence was considered necessary to gain the film a more adult certificate ('R' in the USA and 'X' in the UK), though he personally had aimed the film at a younger age range when making it and was surprised and disappointed that it got this rating.

But if horror is present, at least in the form of gore, then another staple of the vampire genre, eroticism, is largely absent, or at best muted. If modern touches of gore provide some horror then eroticism could at least have been expected in the modern form of naked (female) flesh. True, nudity doesn't automatically guarantee eroticism, but it couldn't have been any less successful than the method employed in the film's one big chance for some erotic content, Dracula's seduction of Lucy, where we are given the two characters, fully clothed, writhing in silhouette against a red laser-light backdrop! (If the gore betrays the film as a late 1970's production then this scene gives it the appearance of a 1967 one (man)!) Perhaps this complaint at the lack of eroticism is just a

chauvinistic male view and Langella had female viewers swooning in the aisles just as he did in the stage version, but it is particularly disappointing considering the film starred two of the four beauties (Kate Nelligan and Jan Francis appeared together in the Granada TV production of 'The Four Beauties' in 1972), who even share a bed together (think what Hammer would have made of that!); and if the red laser 'trip' scene robbed us of some Nelligan nudity then it wasn't due to any reticence on her part because she was both nude and (very) erotic the following year in the BBC's production of 'Theresa Raquin', while it was both a lack of opportunity and continuity that kept Jan Francis under wraps. Lack of opportunity because Dracula works his powers over her mostly from a distance (and then she dies), and a lack of continuity due to a glaring error in the scene where Mina is about to have her heart cut out - Harker's protests are silenced by Van Helsing showing him that she has no reflection, and when he holds the mirror close to her face she is clearly bare-shouldered with a blanket laid across the top of her breasts, yet when the blanket is pulled aside seconds later she is wearing the long-sleeved, high-necked gown she was wearing when she attacked her father in the mine tunnels. Presumably this can be explained by the fact that the effect with the mirror had to be filmed under controlled conditions in the studio while behind-the-scenes photographs show that most of this scene was shot on location, but it's still a bad lapse for such a major production.

On the subject of flaws, one picked up by several reviewers was that Mina first appears to her father in the mine tunnels reflected in a pool of water, but as a vampire she shouldn't have a reflection (personally, as it's such a good shot, I'm inclined to say it was worth usurping vampire conventions to allow it; besides, Mina's ghastly physical appearance in this scene, aged and decayed in only a few days, suggests that she hasn't just been turned into your standard blood-sucker anyway). Jeffrey Frentzen also complained in his review that Mina had reverted to her normal appearance when the body was exhumed when she should still look as she did when she was in the tunnels if it was necessary to cut out her heart (but as she was staked by her father surely she's no longer a vampire and cutting out her heart is merely to "save her soul"? Which then begs the question why doesn't she cast a reflection in the mirror...?).

However, such minor lapses in logic and continuity are trivial compared to a far bigger and damaging flaw if it's truly to be considered a horror film and that's the almost total lack of any tension or terror (the gore might horrify us but it can't terrify us). This is exemplified in the way Langella chose (or was instructed?) to play the Count, for while it is undoubtedly a fine performance, presenting Dracula as a subtle seducer, the decision to play him as an old-time 1920's matinee idol rather than the true Prince of Darkness produces a Dracula who has more in common with Valentino than Vlad the Impaler and



of this TV fame was still ahead of them so perhaps the casting director, Mary Selway, should be congratulated on talent-spotting so many future stars, and obviously faces so familiar through UK television wouldn't present the same problem beyond these shores.

Another element important to the success of the film were the touches of modern horror provided by the special effects department in an attempt to attract an

consequently contributes to this lack of suspense - it's easy to see how this Count is so attractive to women, but it remains a mystery how he can inspire such fear in the hearts of men. Evil may be more interesting when it's attractive, as Badham suggested, but it's just not frightening.

Obviously the direction plays a large part in creating tension within the film but the decision to concentrate on the romantic atmosphere (underlined by the lush score) and impressive visuals while leaving moments of horror for the occasional, admittedly well mounted, set piece, means the more familiar and recognisable facets of tension and terror seem to have been forgone (this is particularly surprising considering Badham's assertion



Jan Francis gets a visit

that he was aiming the film at a teenage audience). Clearly the familiarity of the story doesn't help, despite some laudable attempts to surprise us with some new additions, and it never really escapes its stage origins: in spite of the impressive opening shipwreck and much chasing around the English countryside by car and horse, it still remains far too stagey.

Underpinning a film like this should be a vein of fear and menace, instead the whole piece is too staid, lacking even in excitement and humour, and what humour there is lacks originality and imagination, although some unintentional humour is provided by the sight of Harker's car careering around 1913 England, and the car also features in a decidedly unfunny scene where a horse running out of control has its path blocked by the car and failing to stop in time it slides heavily into the side of the vehicle!

Although John Badham's DRACULA was inevitably compared with and measured against other vampire film releases of that and previous years, a far more pertinent comparison would be with Ridley Scott's ALIEN, released the same month in the UK, and a film that oozed both horror and suspense, proving a major step forward for the genre and leaving Badham's film, even allowing for the fact of its period setting, feeling very old fashioned in its wake.

So viewed as a horror film, this version of DRACULA has to be considered somewhat of a failure, but as a romantic period drama with some horror overtones it's a fine piece of film making with plenty to enjoy and much to recommend it (although from this perspective the gore elements then seem heavy handed).

So is it the finest ever vampire film? Not for me, that honour has to go to Kathryn Bigelow's intense, immensely gripping NEAR DARK (1987) which manages to bring the vampire myth bang up to date while remaining true to the spirit of the legend (for STARBURST readers the title went to FRIGHT NIGHT (1985), with NEAR DARK placed second), but if the question were narrowed to whether it is the best Dracula film of all time then it probably does deserve this title. The size of the budget and general production values take it beyond Hammer's (still considerable) achievements, while the Bela Lugosi original is heavily dated nowadays, but it has to be said that the definitive version of the story has yet to be made. Whether Francis Ford Coppola's version will fit the bill



Is DRACULAX a laxative with bite?

remains to be seen, if it matches the control and depth of THE CONVERSATION or the power and sweep of APOCALYPSE NOW it should be worth the wait, but after the theatrical over-indulgences of the grandiose GODFATHER PART III perhaps we shouldn't be too sanguine, either way you can be sure there are plenty of stakes still to be sharpened before this particular Count is finally put to rest.

MARK MURTON.

CAST & CREDITS

Frank Langella (Count Dracula), Laurence Olivier (Professor Van Helsing), Donald Pleasence (Dr. Seward), Kate Nelligan (Lucy), Trevor Eve (Jonathon Harker), Jan Francis (Mina), Janine Duviski (Annie), Tony Haygarth (Renfield), Teddy Turner (Swales), Sylvester McCoy (Walter), Kristine Howarth (Mrs. Galloway), Joe Belcher (Tom Hindley), Ted Carroll (Scarborough Sailor), Frank Birch (Harbourmaster), Gabor Vernon (Captain of Demeter), Frank Henson (Demeter Sailor), Peter Wallis (Priest).

Directed by John Badham; Produced by Walter Mirisch; Screenplay - W. D. Richter; Based on the Play by Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston; From the Novel "Dracula" by Bram Stoker; Director of Photography - Gilbert Taylor, B.S.C.; Production Designer - Peter Murton, C.F.A.D.; Editor - John Bloom; Music Composed and Conducted by John Williams; Executive Producer - Marvin E. Mirisch; Costume Designer - Julie Harris; Special Visual Effects - Albert Whitlock; Associate Producer - Tom Pevsner; Production Manager - Hugh Harlow; Assistant Director - Anthony Wayne; Second Unit Director - Cery Cavigan; Art Director - Brian Ackland-Snow; Set Dresser - Peter Young; Sound Mixer - Robin Gregory; Sound ReRecordist - Gerry Humphreys; Sound Editor - Johnathan Bates; Camera Operator - Roy Ford; Continuity - Pamela Carlton; Make-Up - Peter Robb-King; Hair - Colin Jamison; Models - Brian Smithies; Special Effects - Roy Arbogast; Visual Consultant - Maurice Binder; Additional Photography - Leslie Dear & Harry Oakes, B.S.C.; Music Orchestrated by Herbert Spencer; Performed by London Symphony Orchestra; Location Managers - Philip Kohler & Jim Brennan; Stunt Co-Ordinator - Eddie Powell; Production Accountant - Len Cave; Publicity - Gordon Arnell & June Broom; Stills Photography - Robert Penn; Make-up - Eric Allwright & Jane Royle; Hairdresser - Susie Hill; Horse Master - Reg Dent; Animal Co-Ordinator - John Holmes; Special Effects - Effects Associates; Costume Supervisor - Brenda Dabbs; Credit Titles - Camera Effects; Construction Managers - Reg Richards & Terry Aspy; Property Master - Andy Andrews; Boom Operator - Terry Sharratt; Assistant Editor - Christopher Ridsdale; Camera Assistants - Peter Taylor & Roger Berner; Gaffer - Laurie Shane; Crip - Ray Hall; Production Assistant - Joyce Turner; Production's Secretary - Bee Broomfield; Assistant to Mr. Badham - Julie Thompson; Dances Arranged by Jan Francis; Casting by Mary Selway; Filmed in Panavision; Colour by Technicolor; Recorded in Dolby Stereo; Made at Shepperton Studio Centre, Shepperton, England - Twickenham Studios, London and on location in Cornwall.

1979.

Length: 9,870 ft.

Running Time: 112 mins. (109 mins. for video).

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COMPETITION T I M E

P E T SEMATARY THE SERPENT & THE RAINBOW TALES FROM THE CRYPT

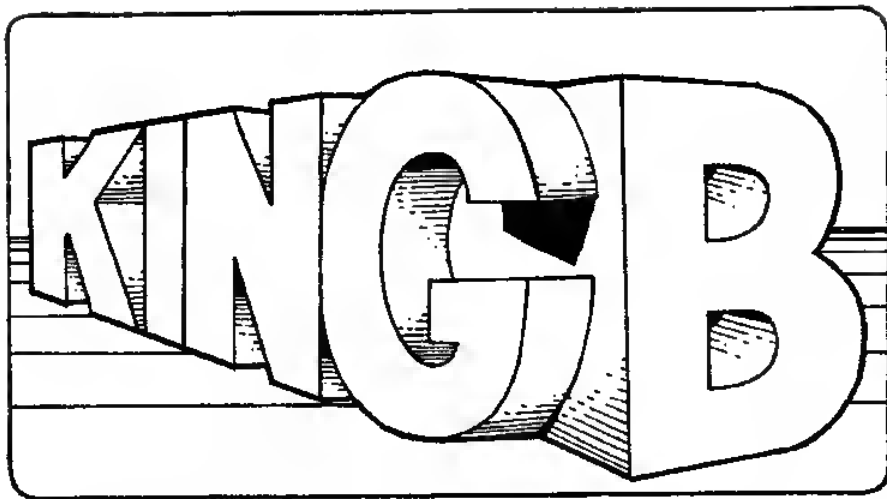
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COMPETITION CLOSES
31ST JANUARY 1992.



ALEX GORDON TALKS TO PAUL J. BROWN ABOUT HIS CAREER

Born in London in 1922, Alex Gordon, along with his brother Richard, quickly developed an interest in the cinema and, inevitably, his interest soon developed into a career. Over the years he has worked in many different capacities and his c.v. reads something like this: Writer of 'fan' magazines from 1939 - 1941; Publicity Director for Renown Pictures Corp. from 1946 - 1947; Vice President and Publicity Rep. for Golden State Productions from 1954 - 1958; Founder of Alex Gordon Productions from 1958 - 1966; Producer for Twentieth Century-Fox Television from 1967 - 1976; Film Archivist/Preservationist from 1976 - 1984 and Vice-President of Gene Autrey's Flying A Pictures from 1985 - present. An impressive list of credentials by anyone's standard and not limited to just one genre - his films have covered everything, horror, science-fiction, teenage, westerns, etc. and he has worked with people like Roger Corman, Ed Wood Jr., Bela Lugosi and Buster Crabbe.

The following postal interview was conducted way back in the Spring of 1990...

PAUL J. BROWN: How did you first become involved in the movie business?

ALEX GORDON: When I was at Canford School in Dorset as a kid, two twins, the Barnes Brothers, had a Bolex 16mm projector and made documentary films and they had seen old movies of the thirties and got me interested, though I had already been a movie buff before I went there. One of the Barnes Brothers now runs a movie museum in Cornwall and has published books on early projectors and cameras. When I came out of the British Army in World War II (I was in from April 1942 until November 1946) I took a job as a publicity man for Renown Pictures in London, George Minter's company. He produced *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*, *NO ORCHIDS FOR MISS BLANDISH*, *PICKWICK PAPERS*, *SVENGALI*, *TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS*, etc. In November 1947 I went with my brother Richard Gordon to New York and worked for Walter Reede Theatres as assistant booker, and was then offered a job by Gene Autrey as publicist on his twice yearly tours of 65 to 85 cities with his 'Gene Autrey Show' of 40 performers and his horses 'Champion' and 'Little Champ'. I had been president of the 'British Gene Autrey Fan Club' before going into the Army.

You've been involved in many different genres but are probably best known for your work in the fantasy field, how big a part does this genre play in your life?

The fantasy field played a part in my life only insofar as I was a fan of Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Claude Rains and other performers in horror and fantasy films. As a producer, I preferred westerns, and my first for AIP was *APACHE WOMAN* with Joan Taylor and Lloyd Bridges, then I got into fantasy with *THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED*, then did *OKLAHOMA WOMAN* with Richard

Denning and Peggie Castle.

I read that you would love to film Bela Lugosi's life story, is this still a project that you would like to complete?

I think Bela Lugosi's life story would make a marvellous picture but there are too many difficulties nowadays in setting up a film, what with financial problems and distribution problems and the interference of people who know nothing about movies and use computers to translate any thoughts and input. They would probably want me to use Tom Cruise to play Lugosi and I'd rather have a stake driven through my heart first.

*Ed Wood Jr. actually turned one of your stories into *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER* (1956), did you have any involvement in the film and have you any reminiscences of the great man himself?*

I wrote *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER* (originally *ATOMIC MONSTER*) in New York before coming to Hollywood, having met Bela Lugosi back there. When I was unable to set it up I introduced Eddie Wood to Lugosi and he managed to find a backer and do it while I was away with Gene Autrey. I was dismayed at the poor casting - except for Lugosi and my suggestion of Tor Johnson - and the poor direction. My 'I have no home' speech remained intact. Eddie Wood himself was a nice and charming man and very sincere about everything he did - he tried to do the best he could under impossible conditions. Everybody took advantage of him. He was a big movie fan and would have worked better under some systematic control.

What was Roger Corman like to work with?

Roger Corman was great to work with - no fuss, no problems, no delays, no temperament, no over budget fears. A real pleasure after the disasters of other directors who did not know their job.

*I heard that your wife, Ruth, had a lawsuit with Corman over *THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH*, what was the story and the final outcome?*

Ruth Gordon's original script for *MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH*, with a screenplay by Mildred and Gordon Gordon, was approved by Vincent Price and handled by his agent Lester Salkow, before AIP made their first Poe film, *HOUSE OF USHER*. When I could not set it up anywhere Salkow gave it to AIP and they stole the contents but the writer died before our lawsuit came to court. AIP settled the day of the court session. Corman's final result on the screen differed from our script though the basic idea and main characters remained similar. Charles Beaumont's script from our script had 84 identical situations. Price said our script was the best Poe script he had ever read.

*How much of a success was *THE SHE-CREATURE* (1956) for you as a producer?*

THE SHE-CREATURE was a cult success in retrospect but at the time of release took over a year to get its money back on a budget of \$104,000. My fee was \$2500 deferred (until the costs were back).

You used the legendary Paul Blaisdell in many of your productions any nice stories relating to his wonderful costumes?

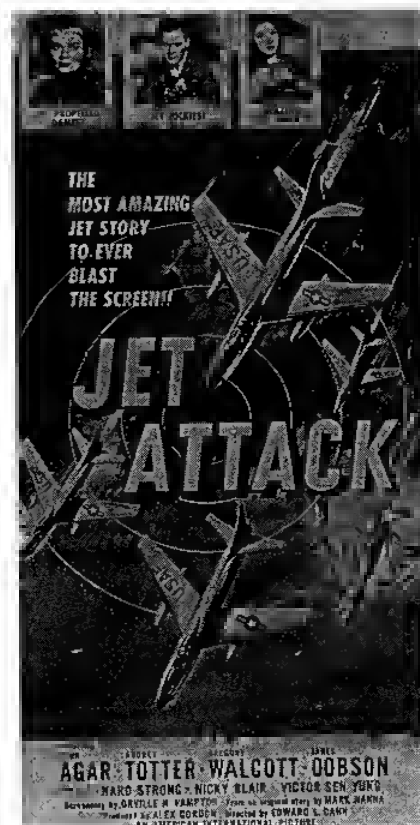
Paul Blaisdell was a charming and capable man who insisted on working as an actor inside his creations. He was badly treated by the industry and by AIP. They didn't appreciate him later and should have used him for other work.

*You made quite a few films that were set underwater, pre-dating a recent trend, is it true that *THE UNDERWATER CITY* (1962) was originally shot in colour and then screened in black & white, if so why?*

THE UNDERWATER CITY was carefully planned for colour shooting with the special effects wizard Howard Lydecker from Republic features and serials and the Howard Anderson company. When Columbia released it in black and white to save money on release prints they ruined the effects. We sued them but the statute of limitations ran out and they later released the film overseas and on TV in colour.

As a film archivist and historian, have you been able to unearth any 'lost' genre films?

As a film archivist and for 10 years, from 1968 to 1978, in charge of film restoration at Twentieth Century-Fox, I was responsible for finding and helping to restore - with the invaluable aid of Eileen Bowser and the Museum of Modern Art in New York who funded the programme - 350 out of the 750 lost films going back to 1914. Among them were the films of silent cowboy great Tom Mix, over a dozen films directed by John Ford, films of such directors as F.W. Murnau, William K. Howard, Howard Hawks, Frank Borzage, Raoul Walsh, *THE BIG TRAIL* with John Wayne, films of Warner Baxter including his Oscar winning performance in *IN OLD ARIZONA*, films of Clara Bow, Bela Lugosi, *CHANDU THE MAGICIAN*, Charlie Chan and Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell films. Also the films of Will Rogers. I never got any acknowledgement in books written about the films of John Ford, Hawks, Rogers, Borzage, Walsh, etc. though the authors could





Alex's first film for AIP

not have written those books without my restoration work. Only William K. Everson in his writings has credited me properly.

Your brother, Richard Gordon, has made many horror movies, how do you rate them and have you been involved with any?

My brother Richard Gordon made many good horror films, among his best being **GRIP OF THE STRANGLER** (aka **THE HAUNTED STRANGLER**), **CORRIDORS OF BLOOD**, **DEVIL DOLL**, **HORROR HOSPITAL**, **THE PROJECTED MAN** and **ISLAND OF TERROR**. I helped him get some American actors for his films like Rod Cameron, Mary Murphy, Wayne Morris, Tom Conway, Marshall Thompson, Zachary Scott, Peggie Castle, etc., but had nothing to do with the production of his films except I thought up the title **FIEND WITHOUT A FACE** and came across the original story for that movie.

Over the past few years I've enjoyed your monthly articles in the pages of **FANGORIA** (The Pit & the Pen of Alex Gordon) how did you get involved with the magazine and did you enjoy working for them?

I enjoyed writing the **FANGORIA** columns but felt 'written out' and didn't want to write about things third hand as I felt my stories were valuable because they were based mainly on personal encounters and experiences. When those were played out I felt it was time to stop.

What are your current projects and what have you planned for the future?

I have no more production

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY OF ALEX GORDON

LAWLESS RIDER, BRIDE OF THE MONSTER, APACHE WOMAN, THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED, OKLAHOMA WOMAN, GIRLS IN PRISON, THE SHE-CREATURE, RUNAWAY DAUGHTERS, SHAKE RATTLE AND ROCK, FLESH AND THE SPUR, VODOO WOMAN, DRAGSTRIP GIRL, MOTORCYCLE GANG, JET ATTACK, SUBMARINE, SEAHAWK, THE ATOMIC SUBMARINE, THE UNDERWATER CITY, THE BOUNTY KILLER, REQUIEM FOR A GUNFIGHTER.

projects. I was involved with the production and the writing and hosting by Gene Autrey of the Nashville Cable Network's Films of Gene Autrey programme - two years of Gene Autrey movies presented in 1988 and 1989, and am Vice-President of Gene Autrey's Flying A Pictures and a curator of his film and TV film archives.

In summing up your long career in the business, what for you have been the high points?

The high points of my career have been my work with Gene Autrey, as publicist and now curator of his films, and the production of films like **THE BOUNTY KILLER** and **REQUIEM FOR A GUNFIGHTER** and the AIP films where I was able to cast actors I liked that I had seen on the screen in earlier years - like Dan Duryea, Chester Morris, Audrey Totter, Tom Conway, Buster Crabbe, Tim McCoy, Johnny Mack Brown, Raymond Hatton, Richard Arlen, Rod Cameron, Bob Steele, Dick Foran, Mary Ellen Kay, Audrey Dalton and so many others.

Thank you Alex Gordon for your time and patience in giving this interview and a special thanks to Forrest J. Ackerman for making it possible.

FAVOURITE FANTASY FILMS OF... ALEX GORDON

(Not in order of favourites)

1. **HERE COMES MR. JORDAN** (1941)
"Great story idea, wonderful performances by Rains and Gleason, many touching moments. The remake by Warren Beatty had none of this and was a dreadful bore"
2. **THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL** (1951)
"Best of the alien from outer space films, superior to ET. Adult in action and dialogue - does not cater to popcorn audiences who talk back to the screen"
3. **THE INVISIBLE MAN** (1933)
"Great fun with two great stars enjoying themselves"
4. **THE RAVEN** (1935)
"Not Poe but great entertainment and lots of fun with the two horror greats trying to out-act each other and cute Irene Ware to boot"
5. **THE INVISIBLE MAN** (1933)
"Granddaddy of the fantasy films, has never been equalled"
6. **KING KONG** (1933)
"Unique - nothing like it ever, certainly not certain attempted imitations"
7. **THE GHOST GOES WEST** (1936)
"Delightful comedy romance with just the right combination of fun and sentiment. Rene Clair directed"
8. **SIX HOURS TO LIVE** (1932)
"Obscure but dramatic and satisfying plea for peace with fine performances and intriguing background"
9. **SON OF FRANKENSTEIN** (1939)
"Karloff, Rathbone, Lugosi, Atwill - what more can you ask for? Grand entertainment in the old tradition and not gory either"
10. **THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN** (1957)
"Poetic and dramatically satisfying. Unusual and classy"

Alex Gordon



A classic double-bill of yesteryear

Sinforde Studio REVIEWS

ABDUCTED BRIDE (1973)

(aka TEENAGE BRIDE/SINFUL DWARF)

Boxoffice International Pictures Inc.

Directed by Vidal Raski.

92 mins

I'm not too sure how to describe this sick exercise in 'soft core' sado-pornography; it appears to be a West German/Scandinavian co-production filmed in the UK and, as one would reasonably expect from a film with such credentials, its cast consists of unknown actors and actresses (if the very limited skills on show here deserve those titles...) including a repellent 'sex dwarf' played with sadistic enthusiasm by a diminutive sick schmuck called 'Torben'... One could speculate that his career as an actor was not furthered by his appearance in this sleaze epic, although his O.T.T. performance is the highlight of an already lurid and inherently offensive scenario: a sleazy boarding-house doubles as a brothel where kidnapped teenage girls are systematically degraded and prostituted unwillingly to total strangers... (Ho hum!) The long and scuzzy shadow of John Waters hangs over the on-screen antics of **ABDUCTED BRIDE**, but even the lengthy rape scenes and whipping of drugged and naked teenage girls, allied to an improbable sub-plot of a toyshop owner smuggling drugs hidden inside teddy-bears, cannot elevate Raski's would-be homage to the dizzying heights of sleazedom that a film like **PINK FLAMINGOS** effortlessly attains. Still, that being said, there are a few effective moments to lift **ABDUCTED BRIDE** out of the morass of potential tedium that it occasionally veers towards, such as the on-screen disembowelling of a teddy-bear which is made to appear nastier than it sounds by the use of pitiful squeaking noises as the blade bites into its (drug filled) torso... Also imbued with an off-kilter charm are several scenes where the dwarf, in between injecting heroin into girls' buttocks in their attic prison/torture chamber, plays the piano as his mother, the appropriately named Mrs. Lash (!), sings and dances in sub-Carmen Miranda fashion! Eventually the prisoners are rescued by some gun-toting police officers who seem to have wandered in from an American cop show, Mrs. Lash is shot in one of the film's only bits of discreet blood-letting, Olaf the demented dwarf leaps to his death to escape the long arm of the law, and the whole tasteless farrago grinds to a merciful conclusion, leaving the viewer with a slightly bad taste in the mouth. However, the fact that **ABDUCTED BRIDE** is not in the same major league of sleaze/trash cinema as **PINK FLAMINGOS** (from which it shamelessly pillages key ideas) or **THE INCREDIBLE TORTURE SHOW** (aka **BLOODSUCKING FREAKS**) which it would appear to have not only pre-dated but inspired, should not be seen as an excuse to ignore its existence; it may be inferior to both the above mentioned films, but I've seen a lot worse in my time, and at least it's not boring! Give it a try...

GORDON WELLE.

AMSTERDAMNED (1988)

Vestron Video.

Directed by Dick Maas.

109 mins.

After biting a randy taxi driver where it hurts, a prostitute is brutally attacked and then dragged into the murky canals of Amsterdam... setting the scene for this slasher film with a watery difference.

The killer strikes again and again, using the water as his stalking (or should that be swimming?) ground and hiding

place. Dutch cop Eric Visser (Huib Stapel) is put on the case - the deaths are playing hell with the tourist trade!

Even though the killings are well spaced the plot is a little sluggish at the beginning, but by the time an excellent speedboat chase sequence is reached things have really leapt up a few gears - eat your heart out **LIVE & LET DIE**!!

As the title suggests it is a Dutch production dubbed into English and is a fairly grisly and effective chiller with one or two lighter moments thrown in to take your mind off the murder and mayhem. It also has a fair number of twists to keep you guessing, the killer is disguised by a diving suit (in fact it looks like it was adapted from the killer's costume in **MY BLOODY VALENTINE**).

Well cast, excellent stunts and definitely worth seeing.

PAUL J. BROWN.

BEYOND THE STARS (1989)

Braveworld.

Directed by David Saperstein.

88 mins.

Seventeen year-old Eric Mason (Christian Slater) has a dream that he will one day become an astronaut and go to the Moon. His father is very bitter towards anything concerned with space, having been fired by NASA when the Apollo programme was axed, and cannot share in his son's dreams and interests. In his spare time Eric builds and flies model rockets but he has an accident with one at school and gets suspended.

This is when Eric's life takes a turn for the better. He meets Mara (Olivia D'Abo), a young waitress, who in turn manages to introduce him to Paul Andrews (Martin THE BELIEVERS Sheen), a former astronaut who has walked on the Moon! Eric's delight soon turns to sadness when he discovers that Andrews is now a heavy drinker who has a big hang-up about not talking of his experience.

Undeterred and still keen to befriend him Eric helps him to build a greenhouse in his yard and gradually the two become very close friends...

"So what?", I hear a lot of you ask. Take heed all you SF buffs, for this little tale is surprisingly rich in fantasy of the purest kind, all about strong personal emotions, and is guaranteed to strike a chord in many a heart that still has hope (God, I sound like a 'Starlogger' here, but it's true!). Of the performances, check out Martin Sheen's brilliant character study of an astronaut harbouring two secrets deep within himself and Christian Slater as his mentor and friend. Slater's skill is rapidly developing now and I find him to be most reliable given any dramatic situation.

I don't want to give away too much of the story but keep a box of Kleenex by you when you give this a whirl!

If you were a kid who like me grew up around the whole Apollo thing then **BEYOND THE STARS** will appeal. Quite simply, this is rewarding entertainment that will keep you gripped right up until its revealing finale!

PAUL J. BROWN.

THE BITE (1989)

Entertainment In Video.

Directed by Fred Goodwin.

94 mins.

With its eye-catching sleeve, another horror starring role for Jill Schoelen (potentially the 1990's Queen of Horror) and the promise of more of Screaming Mad George's off-the-wall make-up effects work, **THE BITE** seemed like a good bet for a fair evening's entertainment.

Unfortunately, however, hope soon fades when the film gets off to a ponderously slow start, with little background information or attempt to establish the characters, as we join Lisa (Jill Schoelen) and boyfriend Clark (J. Eddie Peck) as they travel across America through long stretches of featureless desert (and script) until they unwittingly pass through the abandoned Yellow Sands nuclear test site, resulting in a squashy encounter with the killer snakes that now breed there (which I do hope were the work of Screaming Mad George) and a mutant dog-snake (which definitely is) at a gas station.

Things do improve when the young couple check into a hotel and Lisa strips off for the obligatory shower scene.

Returning to the bedroom, Lisa first finds some green goo in her knickers and then sees something long and frisky squirming under the bedclothes, but with Clark out at the car she takes no chances and beats it to death with her guitar! (Donovan would be proud!) Before they move on, Clark, who was bitten by one of the mutant snakes when they first arrived at the hotel, is administered an antidote by a travelling-salesman-cum-wannabe-doctor, but the thing in his hand continues to grow...

At last the pace picks up for the muddy finale, featuring a semi-clad Lisa slipping and sliding around in a muddy ditch and some truly great effects work from Screaming Mad George - like **SOCIETY** they prove well worth the wait. But overall it's a disappointment; Jill Schoelen tries hard, even singing a song at one point, and proves as personable as ever, but is eventually sunk by a poorly drawn character - once more she proves far better than the material offered, but if this is all she is being offered there's little chance of her living up to the great promise shown in **THE STEPFATHER**. J. Eddie Peck does okay as Clark (again he isn't given much to draw on) but the part could easily have been filled by any one of several dozen other actors, and the less said about Jamie Farr, hopelessly miscast as the salesman/doctor, the better. In the final analysis **THE BITE** doesn't have enough bite to make it stand out among the plethora of similar horror efforts on offer.

MARK MURTON.



How's that for a BITE?

BLOOD MOON (1989)

Capital Home Video.

Directed by Alec Mills.

90 mins.

Take a drab Aussie soap like 'Home And Away' populated by a bunch of airheads, then make it rather un-neighbourly by throwing in some nubile young girls and a maniacal college-killer and you have the ingredients for this down-under excursion into **FRIDAY THE 13TH** territory.

The plot revolves around a hen-pecked, sexually inadequate Mel Smith lookalike who goes around butchering teen-lovers from the local male and female high schools.

Apart from the odd sparkle of Australian wit and a spattering of gore **BLOOD MOON** hasn't really got a lot going for it - be warned!

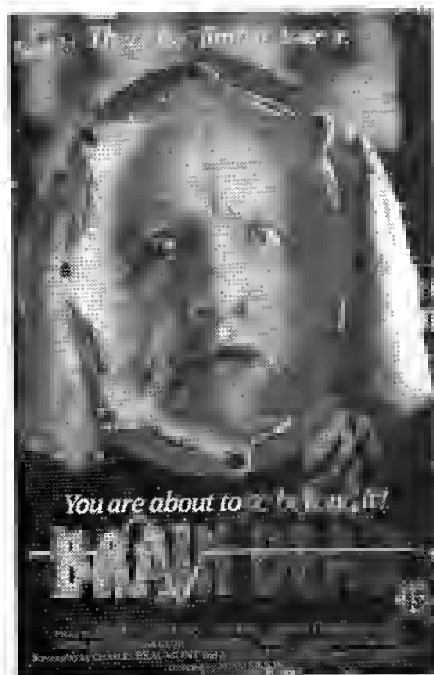
PAUL J. BROWN.

BRAIN DEAD (1989)

MGM/UA Home Video.

Directed by Adam Simon.

81 mins.



BRAIN DEAD... ouch!

Dr. Rex Martin (Bill **SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW** Pullman) studies brains, heaps of 'em, and is researching into trying to find cures for paranoia and schizophrenia. His long time buddy (Bill **ALIENS** Paxton), who works at a big corporation, needs a favour doing - it appears that the corporation's former brilliant physicist, Dr. Halsey (Bud **HAROLD AND MAUDE** Cort), has lapsed into an acute form of paranoia after killing his entire family, but worse than that (!?), he has shut an important mathematical formula deep within his brain and the bosses want it out - "Aren't you getting a little tired of bottled brains?" he asks.

After meeting his 'patient' he is 'talked' into operating on Halsey's live brain... But all this 'brain work' is just too much for Dr. Martin to take and it's not long before he starts suffering from the same symptoms with craziness and paranoia setting in...

Whoaaa! What have we here then? A great little film that's what! What is real, what is a dream...? It's all here, major weirdness on every level. Tremendous hallucinogenic stuff interspersed with blood-spattered scenery and a crazy plot that will keep you guessing and guessing.

Good acting from Pullman and Cort who manage to pull off the feeling of madness and paranoia with total conviction thus giving the whole experience a sense of sanity (if you get my drift!).

Only rated '15', which is a puzzler as there is a fair amount of flip-top brain surgery on show, but don't let that put you off (the eye-catching sleeve should encourage you anyway!). **BRAIN DEAD** is a difficult film to describe, but is definitely worth watching and is guaranteed to keep your 'of grey calls ticking!

PAUL J. BROWN.

THE CAGE (1988)

Legend.
Directed by Lang Elliott.
98 mins.

Vietnam 1969 - Billy (Lou Ferrigno) and Scott (Reb Brown) get themselves into deep shit and only just make it home (after some macho-heroics).

Los Angeles 1989 - As a result of his injuries Billy has become retarded and now has the mind of a child inside the body of **THE INCREDIBLE HULK**. Scott has stuck by him though and the pair of them run a down-town bar. Elsewhere in the city below the streets we have 'The Cage', a place where two muscle-bound "wrestlers" fight to the death much to the glee of the underworld audience who go to gambles on this blood-thirsty spectacle. 'The Cage' is owned and operated by some oriental gangsters and they offer large bets to willing takers if anyone can beat their man Chang.

Two no-hope American small-time crooks, Tony and Mario, owe the orientals big bucks and are desperate to find a good fighter to replace their dead one! They just

happen to stop off for a drink at Scott and Billy's place and are witness to the pair beating three bags of the old brown stuff out of a gang of Mexicans! Seeing this cheers the crooks up no end and they offer the two boys a chance of making big money, etc., but they turn them down flat. Later on Tony and Mario pay the Mexicans to torch the bar in order to make our heroes desperate for money - not only do they burn the place to the ground but also murder Mimi, the guys' closest friend... and to make matters worse (!) the bank are playing up because they had insufficient insurance cover!

At a planned moment Tony and Mario trick and kidnap Billy and then persuade him to enter 'The Cage'. When Scott realises that Billy has gone he puts two and two together and drives off in a gun-toting rage. Meanwhile, Billy's "wrestling" career is about to begin... After a dodgy start, especially the excruciatingly painful theme song (which I'm sorry to say creeps back in at the end!), **THE CAGE** develops into a great piece of brutal exploitation at its most depraved with the mistreatment of a mentally retarded man, but what the heck, Ferrigno has got broad shoulders and rides this sucker with ease - tough, full of action, great fights, lots of seedy characters, etc. - lap it up!

PAUL J. BROWN.

CANNIBAL GIRLS (1972)

A.I.P. (Canada)
Directed by Ivan Reitman.
82 mins.

Ostensibly a horror spoof, **CANNIBAL GIRLS** is too intense in tone for the viewer to find any real humour on display in this very gory Canadian classic; it's depressing that director Reitman is remembered these days as the force behind the more run-of-the-mill comedic outings **MEATBALLS**, **STRIPES** and, of course, **GHOSTBUSTERS**, instead of this 5 Star horror opus. Oh well, "C'est La Vie", as they say in (some parts of) Canada! Set in Farnhamville (the town sign boasts that it is 'The Friendly City'...) **CANNIBAL GIRLS** recounts the tale of two legendary local lasses, the film's eponymous flesh-eaters, who used to lure men back to their secluded house for an evening of wining, dining and fucking, followed by a dessert of murder, mutilation and anthropophagy... yum, yum! A couple of newly weds unwisely choose to stay in Farnhamville, and rashly visit a secluded and fabled 'restaurant' where they are served their meals by two stunningly sexy and slightly sinister young girls... a feeling of unease creeps over the couple as the evening progresses, and they are steadily and surely drawn into a vortex of fear and horror, where fact and fantasy seem to mix and mingle into a blood-drenched nightmare from which there is no escape... Reitman cleverly plays upon the viewers' nerves with all the skill of a virtuoso pianist as he summons up a mood of deep

paranoia in which much of the film's plot is steeped; all is definitely not as it appears in Farnhamville and the viewer is kept on tenterhooks right up to the gory and shocking finale. **CANNIBAL GIRLS** is unflinchingly horrific in a way that many more recent 'horror' efforts have failed to be, and is a genuinely unnerving film. Sadly the print that I viewed had had its 'warning bell' gimmick removed for video release, although this excision does actually improve the film's pacing, as the bloody shocks that Reitman lades on with glee are now not telegraphed in advance, thereby becoming that much more nasty. "They Do Exactly What You Think They Do!" screamed the poster for **CANNIBAL GIRLS**; They do (and how!)... Not recommended for vegetarians, but meat-eaters will love it!

NIGEL BURRELL.

CASTLE OF THE CREEPING FLESH (1967) (aka CASTLE OF BLOODY LUST)

Aquila Film Enterprises.
Directed by Percy G. Parker.
80 mins.

Pretty weird, this one. It looks like a Jess Franco film, and indeed the cast features Franco regular Howard Vernon as the Earl of Saxon, dementedly attempting the re-animation of his dead daughter who was raped and murdered by the neighbouring Baron (played by one of the actors from Franco's 1969 **NECROMICON/SUCCUBUS**). The Franco connection doesn't end there - the luscious Janine Reynaud, who so unforgettably portrayed Lorna in **SUCCUBUS**, also has a key role to play in **CASTLE OF THE CREEPING FLESH**. Both films also share the same scriptwriter, and come from Franco's German film company... So who is Percy G. Parker, an all too obvious pseudonym? Well, of course it isn't Franco, who was taking a well-earned rest from his directorial duties at the time this turkey was being made; nope, the hand on the helm of this altogether cheaper looking production belongs to none other than Adrian Hoven, who produced Franco's classic **S&M** fantasy, and went on to direct **HEXENMARK OF THE DEVIL 2**. Whilst not in the same league as **SUCCUBUS**, **CASTLE OF THE CREEPING FLESH** is good, tacky fun, with a great mock classical soundtrack, lurid and very sleazy sex scenes, a mix of fake blood and all too real stock footage of open heart surgery plus the added bonus of some plonker in a tatty bear costume staggering around pretending to savage people; I mean, what more could one want? Howard Vernon is as awful as one could expect, pottering about in his dungeons carrying out amateur heart transplants with the help of a mysterious and gaunt man in black.

A group of rather unlikeable trendy late 60's 'swingers' are stranded in the eerie castle of the Earl of Saxon, and one of their number is kidnapped to become the unwilling heart donor for the Earl's dead daughter... Throw in a large, beefy, bearded and sinister man-servant, and a very nasty flashback to a historic rape/revenge episode, a pathetic decapitation and some of the most confusing editing and plotting you are ever likely to see and one can readily believe that the spirit of Franco hovered over this film, exerting a baleful and mind-deadening influence... yes, it's that kind of film - so bad that it seems good! The Earl even quotes relentlessly from Shakespeare's epic **'KING LEAR'**; can you believe it? Cheap, cheerless exploitation fodder aimed at the lowest common denominator in the horror audience... needless to say, I loved it!

NIGEL BURRELL.

CATCHFIRE (1989)

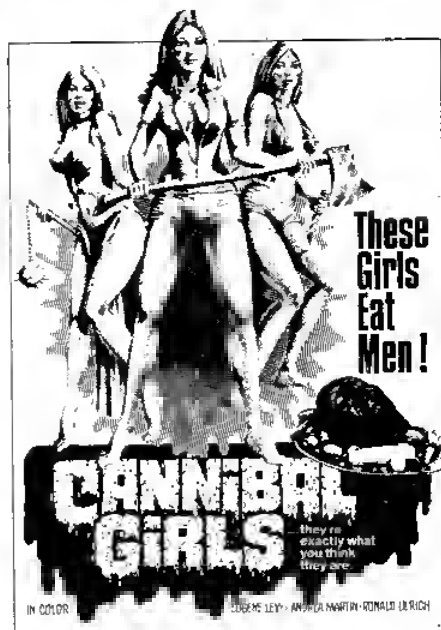
First Independent.
Directed by Alan Smith (Dennis Hopper).
95 mins.

While driving late at night Jodie Foster's car gets a puncture and, forced to abandon her vehicle, she is then witness to a brutal gang slaying. She flees the scene but the cops see her and shoot. Luckily, she escapes and tells the police.

Later that night her boyfriend, Charlie 'get everywhere' Sheen, picks her up and they go home. Shortly afterwards the gang return leaving Jodie on the run and Sheen dead!

The police advice is next to useless and Jodie moves away to get a new identity.

The gang employ the services of a top hit-man, played with relish as an inarticulate, underwearing-loving smoothie saxophonist by Dennis Hopper.



Exploitation poster art at its best - Ivan Reitman's **CANNIBAL GIRLS**

Jodie ducks, dives and dodges around, but, inevitably a few mistakes are made and Hopper sticks close by, but this is turning out to be a very different 'job' for him and is rapidly developing into a passionate obsession. Then, in full 'Lefty Enwright' gear he locates her in New Mexico, picks his moment and while she sleeps cuffs her then offers her a choice of life or death. If she chooses to live then she must act at his beck and call. Eventually she agrees and so embarks on the strangest relationship she's ever had. Needless to say, the gang are none too happy about the situation and are desperate to resolve it. Meanwhile, the odd couple get closer together... Hopper is on form, in a role that only a young De Niro could've bettered, as an original non-archetypal hit-man, giving a performance that gels neatly with the unusual plot and wild character development. This is definitely a cult encounter and as such is likely to be a big hit on the midnight circuit. Jodie Foster is also strong and gives the



CATCHFIRE - love works in mysterious ways

film a thread of reality from which to suspend the bizarre storyline - she also utters lines like "Not only are you a murderer and a rapist but a pompous fucking asshole as well!", good fun, eh? Genre freaks will also be delighted with a cameo from none other than Vincent Price. You could do a lot worse than this, **CATCHFIRE** certainly set me alight!

PAUL J. BROWN.

CUTTING CLASS (1989)

Entertainment In Video.
Directed by Rospo Pallenberg.
91 mins.

CUTTING CLASS is an underrated entry in the field of comedy horror (with a whodunit? plot to boot) and one that's well worth a second look - this is being written after a second viewing which proved far more enjoyable than the first.

The film opens with lawyer and single parent William Carson III about to set off on a hunting trip and warning his daughter Paula (Jill Schoelen) not to "cut class". He leaves and she goes to school. There her boyfriend Dwight (Brad Pitt) is bullying his former friend Brian (Donovan Leitch), who we learn has just been released from a mental institution where he was sent after murdering his father (in a case prosecuted by Paula's father). Out on his hunting trip, Mr. Carson is shot by an arrow from an unseen assailant, but he isn't killed and, in the film's most bizarre scenes, spends the rest of his screen time trying to stumble home for help...

Back at school Dwight, in his attempts to impress Paula, continues bullying Brian. Then the killings start. First to die is the school's art teacher, then in his own kiln. Among the suspects are the sleazy school janitor, the salacious school head, Mr. Dante (Roddy McDowall, who spends most of his time trying (successfully) to peer up Jill Schoelen's skirt - nice work if you can get it!), the boorish Dwight, and of course Brian, who despite shock therapy might not be fully cured after all. Two more deaths at a basketball game are followed by the death (by photocopy) of the vice-principal. Having blown his chance of a scholarship by fighting at the basketball game,



Sam Raimi's **DARKMAN**

Dwight now has a bust-up with the gym teacher who soon finds himself bouncing up and down on a flag-pole thrust up through a trampoline. Searching for Dwight, Paula arrives at the school where she finds herself trapped in a classroom with the maths teacher who has to solve a problem set by the killer before they can escape from the room. But the teacher is axed and Paula flees to the school machine-shop for the final confrontation with the killer...

Comedy-horror is an acquired taste at the best of times and **CUTTING CLASS** isn't likely to win (m)any new converts, but those prepared to give it a try should find something to enjoy, even if it's only trying to guess the killer's identity which is kept well hidden right up to the moment of revelation. This keeping the killer's identity secret and laying a trail of false clues does lead to some slackness in the script and, likewise, some of the characters are a bit one-dimensional with the adults especially coming off poorly. Top billed Donovan Leitch is quite effective as Brian, but only Jill Schoelen as Paula manages to make her character appealing (natch!) - only what's she doing with a jerk like Dwight? The direction is unspectacular although the killings are handled well and come across as fairly original (I don't suppose this was the first film to feature death by photocopy, with endless copies being produced of the dead victim's face, but it is the first time I encountered it) and the final showdown should satisfy most gorehounds as various power tools, a vice and a claw-hammer are all put to heed-splittingly good use (just remember: "Righty tighty, lefty loosey"). Okay, so it's not in the same class as **HEATHERS** (what is?) but there's more than enough to make it worth plucking off the video store shelf.

MARK MURTON.

DARKMAN (1990)

CIC Video.
Directed by Sam Raimi.
91 mins.

After an explosive, but finger-lickin', start we witness first hand the ruthless powers of gangster Robert Durant (Larry T. Drake) as he muscled in on a fellow hood's territory.

Enter onto the scene Dr Peyton Westlake (Liam NEESON), a top scientist working on a revolutionary new liquid skin technique (ala DR X) that could alter the way we now perform plastic surgery, and his attorney girlfriend Julie Hastings (Frances McDormand).

Julie has in her possession a document that could put Durant and his boss away for good and it's not long before the heavy boys come calling on Westlake in search of said paperwork and proceed to cause much in the way of grisly murder and malicious mayhem. The end result is that Westlake's assistant is dead and that he has been left hideously disfigured.

With her lover presumed dead by the police (they only found an ear!), Julie is left to mourn for him and has to try and get on with her life. However, Westlake survives and is to be found in a special burns hospital under the care of Jenny Agutter (and, no, she doesn't end up taking him home as she did with patient David McNaughton in **AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON II**). He is so badly burned that the doctors have had to surgically sever some of his nerves to free him from pain, but in doing so they have created a man with an extremely volatile set of emotions, unable to control his anger but still capable of personal feelings.

With the pain now gone and with some new found strength, Westlake breaks free from his hospital restraints and tries to secretly re-assemble his life, lab and, primarily, his face!

He manages to salvage a lot of his laboratory equipment and sets up shop in a condemned factory.

He is successful in rebuilding his equipment and gets back to work on his liquid flesh process.

With the process underway he sets about re-affirming his relationship with Julie and devises a plan of revenge on Durant and his cronies. By taking photographs of his victims he can recreate their images and mould their likenesses and by wearing the 'mask' can infiltrate the lairs of the villains - Westlake's big problem is that he only has 99 minutes before the 'skin' smokes and eventually melts away to nothing!

Moving at a pace akin to something like an Exocet Missile, Raimi has created a magnificent comic book movie that is both intelligent and mega-exciting.

The casting of Neeson as Westlake proved to be the right move and he even seems to be enjoying what he is doing, whether swooping along as the **PHANTOM/INVISIBLE MAN** inspired anti-hero, complete with cloak and bandaged head, or expressing himself to an understandably distressed girlfriend, showing that he can adapt himself to almost any acting situation with relative ease.

Okay, so the plot is a touch implausible but with such a breakneck pace and razor sharp editing you can't help getting swept along with it and are left simply open-mouthed at the marvellous effects and death-defying stunts.

Raimi's familiar roving, almost Argento-esque, camera work is magnificent and goes a long way to making this one of the best genre productions from 1990. Fans will love a scene that mirrors the hurtling eyeball from **EVIL DEAD II** with the said appendage being replaced by a flying rivet!

Coming over as a cross between **PHANTOM OF THE OPERA** and **BATMAN**, **DARKMAN** is pure escapist entertainment at its best and has the added bonus of being restored to an '18' for video.

Well done Sam!
PAUL J. BROWN.

DAS DEUTSCHE KETTENSAGEN- MASSAKER (1990)

(aka **THE GERMAN CHAINSAW
MASSACRE**)

Courtesy of Megafilms Berlin.
Directed by Christoph Schlingensief.
(Screened in German with English subtitles)
63 mins.

In February of this year (1991), a screening of Christoph Schlingensief's grisly satire of German re-unification caused a fracas at the Berlin Film Festival when some members of the audience came to blows; the July 27th showing of **THE GERMAN CHAINSAW MASSACRE** at the Cambridge Arts Cinema as part of the annual Cambridge Film Festival merely caused a fairly large part of the (small) crowd to walk out in disgust of the on-screen excesses. Those who stayed the course were treated to an amusing and undeniably offensive little quasi-artistic gorefest that seemed to owe as much to John Waters (**PINK FLAMINGOS**, **FEMALE TROUBLE**, etc.) as it did to its more obvious influence, the 1973 classic **THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE**. The story opens in Leipzig in the Autumn of 1990: a young girl, Clara, brutally kills her unprepossessing husband and absconds in their Trabant to the West, to seek better things... What she finds, after an ill-fated meeting with her lover (which ends with him having his head graphically beaten in by a crazed stranger), is a motel run by a depraved family of psychopathic deviants who operate out of a deserted slaughterhouse, waylaying errant East Germans, killing them and turning them into sausages! This motley band of cannibals are clearly based on Tobe Hooper's **CHAINSAW** family, but are also reminiscent of the hoodlums in Wes Craven's **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** (1972), never more so than in the funny and ultimately shocking scene where they race along in an open-top sports car, singing loudly and shouting "Unification" as they force an East German car off the road and drag out the bewildered couple inside, to face a horrible and protracted death. Whatever anyone might accuse **THE GERMAN CHAINSAW MASSACRE** of being, subtle would be the last thing that would spring to mind: bloody chainsaw dismemberings, stabbings, rapes (both heterosexual and lesbian) and a throwaway castration litter the film's meagre running time almost as much as scattered body parts and gory corpses bestrew the slaughterhouse. Things get increasingly unpleasant when Clara and her still living boyfriend start to turn the tables on their tormentors, and several of the Chainsaw clan meet their maker in graphic and nasty ways; Clara seduces the lesbian slut who has attempted to rape her, ending her sex session by knifing her up the arse! This scene got the most negative response from the audience, especially when the staggering victim fell on her backside, forcing the blade in even deeper... ouch!! The gore effects range from quite convincing to patently ludicrous, much like those found in the films of H.G. Lewis, clearly another influence of director Schlingensief, but within the context of the fast-paced, frenetic slapstick of **THE GERMAN CHAINSAW MASSACRE** most of them work well. Some of the (translated) dialogue is great too: "In my dreams the dead are more real than the living" cries one of the Family as he chainsaws the head of a victim, and another family member who proudly wears a WWII German helmet has a habit of yelling "It's slaughter day!" as he goes on the rampage. Clara escapes in a finale blatantly ripped-off from the **THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE**, leaving one of the cannibals (a schmuck who earlier axed his own hand off!) to pontificate in philosophical terms "Everything has an end, except for the Wurst - it has two!". The final image of the film, after the credits have rolled, is that of a burning Trabant, a visual summary of Schlingensief's attitude to re-unification? Whatever the political viewpoint of the film (apparently an attack on the voracious exploitation of the East Germans by their Western cousins), the fact remains that **THE GERMAN CHAINSAW MASSACRE** seems destined to achieve something of a cult following, and may well become a staple of British Honor Festivals to come. There is no way, given the current ideological bent of the BBFC, that Schlingensief's little gore opus will ever be granted a certificate for general release: this is a shame, for, all its faults notwithstanding, **THE GERMAN CHAINSAW MASSACRE** deserves a wider audience than that which it will get on pirate video prints. Recommended wholeheartedly for trash fiends and gorehounds alike, sniff this one out!

NIGEL BURRELL

DOCTOR WHO : THE TALONS OF WENG- CHIANG (1977)

BBC Video.
Directed by David Maloney.
134 mins.

Remember 1977? When Thatcherism was a disaster yet to happen and The Clash were too busy trying to kick-start the revolution to worry about selling jeans (ha, you think it's funny turning rebellion into money?). And a time when the familiar strains of the **DOCTOR WHO** theme were a guarantee of 20-25 minutes of top TV entertainment... or were they? Even the most ardent **DOCTOR WHO** fan would have to admit that the show passed its prime many years since, but was it ever really that good or were we just less demanding back then? With this in mind it was with some trepidation that I handed over my £1 rental fee (Big spender! - Assistant Ed.) for this chance to wallow in 134 minutes of nostalgia. Well, happily, it more than lived up to expectations in almost every respect: strong story, good dialogue, uniformly fine performances (with perhaps a little ham here and there, which is inevitable in a period piece like this but it is kept largely in check), and solid direction from David Maloney who makes an impressive attempt at creating period atmosphere as well as giving many scenes an air of pervading menace (considering **DOCTOR WHO**'s well-known budget restrictions it makes the efforts of ITV's million pound budgeted **JACK THE RIPPER** look not so much laughable as downright disgraceful).

The involving story (and it's too involved to do justice to in a few lines) starts with the Doctor returning to Victorian London with his latest companion, Leela, to show her how her Earth ancestors would have lived, but it isn't long before they are deeply embroiled in a plot involving abducted girls, the Terror of the Tongs, a giant rat and the sinister 'Mr. Sin'.

THE TALONS OF WENG-CHIANG is highly entertaining and it was no hardship to sit through the whole story in one sitting (although it could also be viewed in six parts as it was first broadcast), and particularly enjoyable are the performances of the two leads. Tom Baker was the longest-serving Doctor and it's easy to see why as he clearly has a whale of a time providing a totally assured performance with plenty of physical and verbal comic touches (one magical moment has the curly-haired Baker emerging from underneath a table, grinning broadly and looking exactly like Harpo Marx!), and he is matched every step of the way by Louise Jameson as the leather mini-skirted Leela (although here she slips out of her leather mini to don a costume more appropriate to the Victorian setting, but by way of compensation she does strip down to her underwear in one scene - which turns rapidly see-thru when wet!), hers is a wonderfully feisty performance as a (at the time) new sort of **DOCTOR WHO** companion, one who gives as good as she gets rather than running to the Doctor for protection - gorgeous and talented, with a fine sense of comic timing, it's easy to see how she got down to the last ten for the part of Purdey in **THE NEW AVENGERS**.

Unfortunately, the quality of these other elements isn't matched by the spfx work which seems to consist of a few fireworks and one rather unconvincing giant rat (kudos again to Louise Jameson for managing to look suitably terrified as the cuddly, muppet-like rat closes in on her) which it would have been far wiser to keep in the shadows as much as possible. But this isn't really a serious flaw as you are so into the story by this time that it's easy to forgive the (notoriously) low budget effects: the rat might not be scary, but something upset the video censors enough for them to demand a 10 second cut before granting it a 'PG' (all the other other **WHO** videos released so far have been rated 'U'), and I'd be fascinated to know what caused such a reaction (Please drop us a line if you have any info - Ed.).

Only the (lack of) quality of the effects keep this from a place in the 'TV CLASSICS' section (which, ironically, isn't in this issue - Ed), other than that this form of time travel via the video store proved highly enjoyable and I look forward to making another trip soon (especially if **THE TERROR OF THE AUTONS** ever finds its way onto video).

MARK MURTON.

ENCOUNTER AT RAVEN'S GATE (1988)

Castle Pictures.
Directed by Rolf De Heer.
85 mins.

The story basically revolves around three people, Eddie, his brother Richard and Rachel (Richard's wife), and the effects on their lives when they are subjected to some strange unexplained phenomena that can only be put down to UFO activity.

As the events continue it is only the recently paroled Eddie who seems to fully appreciate what is going on. All the regulation UFO trademarks are present: surges and dips in the electricity supply; car engines cutting out; circular scorch marks on cropland, etc., but we are also witness to other strange events like water mysteriously drying up; livestock dropping dead; birds plummeting from the sky; and an old couple getting fused together in a mass of flesh! Wisely, the film-makers have decided not to manifest the presence on screen, thus leaving it up to the imagination and by doing so, in this case, have made it all that more disturbing and realistic.

Stylishly directed by one of Australia's hottest new talents and furnished with a cast that all act out their inter-relationships perfectly, the best being Steven Vidler (Eddie) who manages to be totally convincing as well as harbouring a brooding persona - good stuff!

The scenes that are set in the old couple's house are wonderfully eerie and otherworldly having been created by some standard effects - just plain old dry ice, water and sound distortion; see, there's no need to spend millions!! Good viewing for those of you with a penchant for the unexplained and it's certainly a film that I'm glad I encountered.

PAUL J. BROWN.



A grisly ENCOUNTER AT RAVEN'S GATE

EVE OF DESTRUCTION (1990)

Guild Home Video.
Directed by Duncan Gibbins.
96 mins.

While out on a routine testing session, a scientist and a very human-like droid, EVE VIII (an exact replica of her creator, Eve Simmons), get caught in a bank hold-up wherein the scientist gets killed and the beautiful, but now deadly, EVE makes off with an Uzi for company! In the incident the robot was shot and the wound has set up a serious malfunction with her system being set into 'Battlefield Mode'!



EVE OF DESTRUCTION... don't call her a bitch!

Top field man Colonel Jim McQuade is brought in by the government to stop their latest toy. He is briefed on all the relevant details, like how to kill her, etc., but they leave out a minor point - she is carrying a nuclear warhead! Meanwhile, EVE VIII has done some **TERMINATOR**-style self repairs, brought plenty of ammo, hired a car and has killed herself out with some serious street-cred clothes... and in a relatively short space of time blows away five cops, explodes a car, breaks assorted limbs and even bites the dick off a red-neck!

"This has gotta be low profile", says an official! It seems that EVE VIII is reliving all of her creators life and doing things that Ms. Simmons would only dream about doing.

The search goes on... and then in another little confrontation with the 'enemy' EVE VIII runs a yuppie off the road (wouldn't ya just love to?!), suffering some severe impact damage and in doing so sets herself on a 24 hour countdown to Armageddon - she's packing enough power to destroy around twenty or thirty cities! Surprisingly good, considering that the basics have been covered before, but this is exciting action, with plenty of bloody gunfire and witty dialogue - "So this device of yours is horny as well as psychopathic" - to keep most of us on the edge of our seats. Renee **THE FOURTH MAN** Soutendijk plays the dual roles of both Eve's and proves herself worthy of the acclaim she has won in the past as she delivers the goods in all departments. The gun-toting Colonel is acted by Gregory Hines who thankfully leaves his tap shoes at home and enjoys himself in his best genre outing since Michael Wadleigh's marvellous **WOLFEN**.

Recommended viewing for those of you with a taste for splattery violence and attractive cyborgs - just don't call her a bitch!

PAUL J. BROWN.

THE EXORCIST III (1990)

CBS/Fox Video.

Directed by William Peter Blatty.
105 mins.

I will never forget, not in a million years, my initial viewing of William Friedkin's shocking chef-d'oeuvre, **THE EXORCIST**. Neither will I forget the sleepless nights or, on the nights I did manage to get some shut-eye, the vicious nightmares which plagued me for months after it, dreadful consequences of "experiencing" an out-and-out blood-and-thunder horror movie at a tender age.

The inevitable sequel **EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC** arrived four years later. It should never have been conceived let alone produced. Unfortunately, it was and the film consequently had more verbal abuse hurled at it than the clergymen in the prequel had spewed at them. And it richly deserved every bit and then some.

So... what were we to expect with the overdue **THE EXORCIST III**? Well, if you'll pardon the generic pun, the omens certainly looked good: William Peter Blatty, the scenarist of the original film and author of the best selling novels 'The Exorcist' and 'Legion' (on which **THE**

EXORCIST III is based), was returning to write the screenplay and was this time seated in the director's chair as well; a sterling cast that included such cinematic and theatrical stalwarts as George C. Scott, Brad Dourif, Nicol Williamson and Jason Miller (reprising his Father Damien Karras role from the first film); no sign of any of the cast/crew of **THE HERETIC** (let's face it, you couldn't exactly not improve on that now, could you?) but it does pale somewhat in comparison to Friedkin's film. Then again, Blatty's is a very different type of film... at least until the last twenty minutes - which features an exorcism, incidentally - when the film bursts into life; admittedly, the shocks contained herein pack a truly monstrous wallop, but sadly it's only because everything that precedes these climatic minutes is so terribly tedious and talky. The plot concerns a series of hideous ritualistic killings (all of them discussed in detail, none actually depicted on screen, Gorezonians take note) which are being committed in and around the Georgetown Jesuit community fifteen years after the liberal servings of MacNeil's homemade green pea soup inter alia. Lt. Kinderman (Scott, filling the shoes previously occupied by Lee J. Cobb who portrayed the character in the original) takes on the case in spite of the fact that he should be retired and drawing his pension.

What is particularly intriguing about this current crop of killings is that their sick style bears more than just a partial similarity to that of the psychotic Gemini Killer... but he got the hot seat fifteen years ago and on the very same day that the Devil left the soul of little Regan and entered Father Karras. Yep, there sure appears to be strange forces at work.

The key to it all lies in the confines of a gloomy hospital, one helluva creepy place where the corridors are long and dimly lit, elderly women scuttle across ceilings and pretty young nurses are operated on with enormous

to say to one another and religious iconography than in visceral and violent visuals and this is fine up to a point but through over-use, the effect is counter-productive. Indeed, it is sometimes as if Blatty were directing a book and not a film. Why he chose to do it this way is a mystery to me... perhaps the Devil made him do it...

PETER BENASSI.

THE FIRST POWER (1990)

MGM/Pathé.

Directed by Robert Resnikoff.

99 mins.

The title here refers to the concept of immortality, which is attained by a ritualistic serial murderer, 'The Pentagram Killer', who returns from execution to possess a procession of host bodies. A totally miscast Lou Diamond Phillips can't cut it as a police inspector, But Tracy Griffith, a dead ringer for her famous sister Melanie, is eye-catching as a young psychic assisting on the case (is her character's name 'Tess' a nod to big sis's performance in **WORKING GIRL**?), and the energetic, acrobatic demon/psycho is great fun, evading capture by leaping off tall buildings unscathed, and taunting his pursuers with playful evil throughout the movie - my favourite examples being his catchphrase "how's the stomach, buddyboy?" and the scene where, posing as a beg-lady, he levitates up to Griffith's window and begins twirling around in mid-air!

I've gotten really tired of the endless dream sequences, fake endings and other bits of trickery appearing in the films of Wes Craven and imitators, but Resnikoff has composed an entire movie out of such bits and pieces, resulting in a constantly disorientating, highly-charged action shocker with a terrific villain and, for once, an extremely weird sombre ending with supposed 'star' Phillips left looking far from heroic.

First rate.

DARRELL BUXTON.



FLATLINERS - say, Kiefer, I don't think Julia's gonna show!

shears but without anaesthetic. Not your normal run-of-the-mill hospital. It is here that the heinous spirit of the Gemini Killer resides, deep within the soul of Father Karras whose body has been repairing itself following the horrific injuries sustained as a result of his leaping from Regan MacNeil's bedroom

window. It is here that the climatic confrontation between good and evil takes place with Father Morning (Williamson) performing the expected rite of exorcism.

Apart from one genuinely jolting, nicely calculated shock moment and the climatic exorcism which, while very intensely handled, nevertheless looks decidedly disparate from the rest of the movie, **THE EXORCIST III** is a pretty ponderous picture. I got the impression that, because of the title, the producers felt obliged to include an exorcism of some kind. However tacked on that sequence looks, the picture just couldn't do without it because it's the saving grace of the entire affair. As the director, Blatty seems far more interested in what his protagonists have

FLATLINERS (1990)

Columbia Pictures.

Directed by Joel Schumacher.

114 mins.

"Today's a good day to die" is the opening line, it's also a damn fine day to watch a film if they're all as good as this one - **FLATLINERS** is a superbly realised tale that not only looks good but has the ability to involve the viewer to the point where it is possible to forget that you're watching a movie (in a cinema that is, it loses this effect on video).

What's it all about then? Well, 'flatlining' is a medical term used to describe what happens when a patient's heart stops beating and a flat line appears on the screen of a heart monitor.

A group of ambitious medical students (Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts, Kevin Bacon, William Baldwin and Oliver Platt) are researching the various reports and stories of



"Where the hell is Peter Benassi?!" - Brad Dourif in **EXORCIST III**

people who say that they have 'died' for a few moments and have seen themselves on a hospital bed, etc., and that a strange force 'saved' them and decided that it wasn't their time to die.

Nelson (Sutherland) has plans, he wants to die under supervision and then, after a pre-determined time, be revived and brought back from the dead to see if there really is anything out there!

After some arguing amongst the group they finally all agree to help him with the experiment. In a disused university building they set up all their 'borrowed' monitors and equipment. Nelson is then 'killed' and we (the viewers) enter into his mind and get to see the images that flash past him - a minute passes and the others attempt to revive him. They are successful and Nelson admits that something definitely is out there!

Now that Nelson has done it the others are falling over themselves to queue up and take their place on the slab, each one pushing the other to a longer 'time under' in a bizarre form of bidding - "One minute twenty seconds", "One minute thirty...", etc!

Next up is the womanising Joe (Baldwin), who is also successful in 'coming back' and again, he experiences something, but with him it's almost a sexual feeling.

And so it goes on with each member of the troop going longer and longer.

All of this sounds fine but Nelson had omitted to mention that since coming back from the dead he seems to have been suffering from some form of hallucination and that this 'hallucination' has started to beat him up on a regular basis!!

Then Joe keeps seeing things, things from his past, things that keep frightening him...

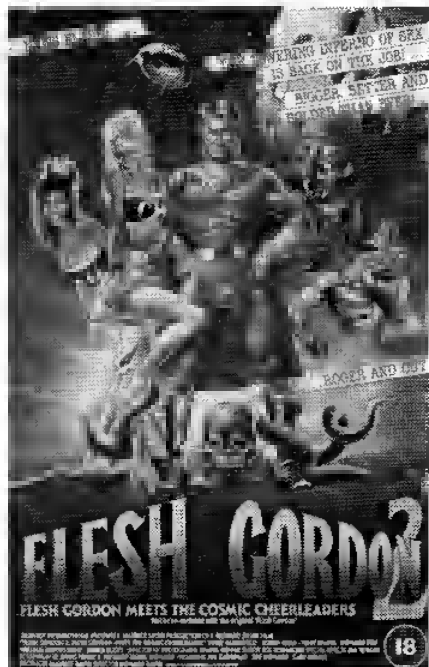
Each one seems to have brought back something horrific with them. Will they get to the root of their new found problems and just how far will they go in the name of science...?

Extremely exciting and intelligent viewing that is paced to perfection and acted by a very able bunch of performers. It's easy to like and get on with all of them.

It's a controversial subject (Catholics should find it interesting?) and whether you're a believer or not I urge you to see it. The photography is breathtaking and this helps to give it that extra polished look. Schumacher showed a certain amount of flair with **THE LOST BOYS** and with this film he has shown that he has honed his skills to perfection, last I heard he was to next direct Andrew Lloyd Weber's **PHANTOM OF THE OPERA** and it will be very interesting to see what he does with it?

Is there life after death, personally I'd like to think so, but, alas, by the time I find out I'll not be in a fit state to tell you! So, in the meantime do yourself a favour and give **FLATLINERS** a look. I just pray that they don't fuck it up by making a silly sequel!

PAUL J. BROWN.



Long live the new FLESH!

FLESH GORDON 2 : FLESH GORDON MEETS THE COSMIC GHEERLEADERS (1990)

Entertainment In Video.
Directed by Howard Ziehm.
101 mins.

Robunda Hooters and her pack of sex-starved intergalactic Ingenues kidnap astronautical adonis Flesh Gordon, intending to use his individual 'talents' to revitalise their impotent planet - but a mysterious hooded dictator, plotting the overthrow of the galaxy plus escape from his loony mad scientist and obese, demanding spouse, wants Gordon's vital organ for himself...

Featuring F.G.'s perilous journey through the 'Ass-teroid Belt', an encounter with a grouchy giant penis on legs, a lingerie-clad Dale Ardour caged and chained, a group of singing turds performing 'Bowl Of Love', and frequent references to oral sex ('eating Sushi') and chicken-fucking, this science-fiction parody isn't sufficiently erotic to appeal to the grubby raincoat crowd, nor witty enough for comedy fans, though the occasional funny line filters through - a stand-up (!) comic at the 'G-Spot' nightclub commenting on the lack of men in the audience, reflecting that they have difficulty finding the place, is perhaps my favourite. Still, Flesh is a big improvement on Sam J. Jones in the 1980 Laurentis version, and the young lady playing Dale is a pretty cute babe, especially during the slimy 'tongue' sequence!

DARRELL BUXTON.

FRANKENHOOKER (1990)

Medusa.
Directed by Frank Henenlotter.
81 mins.

Crazed power company worker and part-time bio-electro-technician, Jeffrey Franken (James **STREET TRASH** Lorinz), has a big problem when his girlfriend, Elizabeth (Patty Mullen), gets scythed down by a runaway lawnmower - "... reduced to a tossed human salad... one big jigsaw puzzle" is how the TV news people report it but they also report that "... parts, including the head, have gone missing".

Poor old Jeffrey just doesn't know what to do with himself, his mother gives him some advice, "You gotta find yourself another girl" she says.

As time passes Jeffrey's mind becomes more and more crazed until he eventually removes Elizabeth's head, foot and hand from his freezer and, over dinner, he makes plans to rebuild her - "I can make you the centre-fold goddess of the century".

In his lab (a converted garage) he has assembled all the electrical equipment that might be needed for such a resurrection and according to the local TV weatherman (played by horror host John Zacherle) there will be a BKG electrical storm heading Jeffrey's way very shortly. He has only two days to find some extra female body parts with which to reconstruct his beloved, but where the hell does he get them from?! To draw inspiration our man does the only thing a man can do in such a predicament... he picks up his trusty Black & Decker and proceeds to drill away at his own brain until he hits upon a brilliant idea!!



Would you date Patty Mullen from FRANKENHOOKER?

He makes his way down to the local red-light area with his Christmas savings in his pocket. He manages to make contact with a muscle-bound pimp and arranges for a group of crack-crazed hookers to be made available so that he can secretly select the parts he needs!

Jeffrey brews his own 'super-crack', to speed things up a little, and meets the girls in a seedy hotel room. He quickly gets down to work with his tape, micrometer and notepad, measuring all the bits and bobs in search of the perfect legs, the perfect breasts, etc!

All is going great for him until he realises that he can't go through with it and prepares to leave but the girls steal his case of 'super-crack' and get down to some serious partying. What they don't realise though is that this drug won't just blow your mind, it'll blow you to pieces!

Within minutes Jeffrey is surrounded by exploding hookers with limbs, torsos and heads scattered all over the room. He quickly bundles all the bits into some bin-liners and makes his way back to his garage.

At once he begins the rebuilding of Elizabeth... the thunderstorms start to rage and Jeffrey works on...

At last, Elizabeth is ready and after being exposed to the heavens his girl is once again standing before him! "Wanna date... looking for some action... got any money?" are Elizabeth's first immortal words, she then slaps his face and stumbles off into the night to wreak havoc in Times Square...

Brilliantly funny, wonderfully sick, sleazy, perverse and wildly original - a great piece of exploitive low-budget cinema from the maniacal mind of director Henenlotter who, with this picture, must have been sampling some of the 'super-crack' on offer!

The effects are suitably cheap and rubbery (handled by Gabe Bartalos) and serve to make the film that much more enjoyable - the perfect trash film for late-night viewing! What really carries it, however, are the central performances of James Lorinz, who plays the proceedings in a Jeffrey RE-ANIMATOR Camm style and is very effective, and the quite superb hamming of 'Playboy Pet' Patty Mullen, who struts her stuff (in wonderful Karloffian shoes) and displays a funny montage of sight gags to perfection!

As I said before, this is sick stuff and although low on gore has more than enough laughs, flash and effects to satisfy even the most anaemic of horror fans. Guaranteed fun, a sort of 'meccano' movie with just as many parts! The ending has to be seen to be believed and will bring most closet transvestites out in a cold sweat!

PAUL J. BROWN.

HALF PAST MIDNIGHT (1988)

Vink Pictures.

Directed by Wim Vink.

32 mins.

Auteur Wim Vink makes a bid to become Holland's answer to H.G. Lewis in this very short and splattery home movie, shot on film (in English) and transferred to video.

The plot is moronically simple and clichéd; a young girl is harassed and bullied by her peers in a school that appears to be the Dutch equivalent of the one in Mark Lester's unpleasant CLASS OF 1984 (1982). Things go from bad to worse for her - she is raped by a trusted teacher, and when she is knocked down by a truck outside her school and taken to the local hospital her enemies bribe one of the nurses to kill her. She returns from the dead to murder and mutilate her erstwhile schoolmates in a variety of bloody and bizarre ways, utilizing an assortment of sharp instruments and (of course!) a chainsaw. The killings are largely shot off-screen, but the viewer does get to see the bloody aftermath of her vendetta; after one particularly grisly chainsawing we are treated to the spectacle of the sum total of the victim's internal organs falling onto the floor between her legs...! The ending appears to be left open for a sequel, but maybe Wim Vink will choose a more original premise for his future projects? Still, when all is said and done, HALF PAST MIDNIGHT is an O.K. little gore-flick and augurs well for the future of the independent European horror scene. Track it down if you can and remember "revenge is sweet... bloodsweet".

NIGEL BURRELL.

A HATCHET FOR THE HONEYMOON (1969)

Pan Latina Films/Mercury Films.

Directed by Mario Bava.

93 mins.

"A woman should live only until her wedding night, love once, and then... die!". Yep, it's another rational, reasonable, marbles-intact Mario Bava psychopath, this one wielding a meat-cleaver so shiny his victims can see their screaming faces in it as it hacks through skin and bone. A HATCHET FOR THE HONEYMOON is fabulous, its basic giallo plotline, in which self-confessed paranoiac madman Stephen Forsyth chops up a series of budding brides, being interrupted, in almost Shakespearean manner, by the relentless intrusion of supernatural elements. The film is unconventionally structured, constantly catching the viewer off guard - the killer is married to a sarcastic blonde bitch, who we anticipate will taunt her psychotic hubby throughout the film, until he unexpectedly turns on her with his hatchet about a third of the way in, this leading to a tremendously suspenseful scene as her blood drips on to the hall carpet, inches away from the unwitting detective routinely questioning hubby about another girl's disappearance. Bava toys with our expectation again and again, as Forsyth nonchalantly returns to his job as a fashion designer only to realise that his colleagues, clients and models can all see his wife's funeral spirit, and that all react to her as though she is alive (one old dear even traps her into a boring conversation at a garden party). The ghostly spouse continues to plague and pester him, even after Forsyth digs up her corpse to incinerate it so he can carry the ashes around with him in a Gladstone bag; eventually, after his failed attempts to dispatch a red-haired model working as a police plant have resulted in Forsyth's arrest, his spectral wife finally manifests herself to him in the back of the van packing him off to the local booby-hatch, promising to torment him for eternity. Plenty of traditional Bava zooms, an excellent score by Sante Romitelli (lush romantic strings, suddenly drowned out by the discordant shards of electric guitar), and some marvellous set-pieces, notably the bridal dance of death in which Forsyth and a lace-clad beauty waltz among a host of tailor's dummies sporting wedding finery.

DARRELL BUXTON.

THE HORROR SHOW (1989) (aka HOUSE III)

Braveworld.

Directed by James Isaac.

91 mins.

Lance ALIENS Henriksen plays cop Lucas MacCarthy who, in the opening scenes, manages to arrest mass-murderer (116 victims!) Max Jenke (Brion BLADE RUNNER James) after a horrific battle in a blood-stained factory.

But since that time he has been medically rested from the force due to recurring nightmares of the sadistic killer.

Eventually Jenke is sentenced to death in the electric chair.

To try and exorcise the demons from Lucas' head he attends the execution.

Jenke is strapped in and they give him the first jolt - "all that did was give me a hard-on" he gloats! The voltage is increased and he fries in a vein-bursting spectacle but doesn't eventually die until after he has managed to stagger from the chair and vowed vengeance on poor Lucas, "I'm gonna tear your world apart"!

Later, at the morgue, all is not normal and Jenke's twisted soul departs the body and enters the cellar of Lucas' house.

Lucas is finally given the all-clear by the police shrink to return to work even though his daydreams (nightmares) and hallucinations continue.

Lucas takes his wife out for dinner to celebrate - giving Jenke his first chance to get even... he cleaves up their daughter's boyfriend in the cellar. The body then disappears.

The hallucinations get worse and a professor (who is studying a theory that pure evil is a form of electromagnetic energy) warns Lucas that Jenke is not dead. The prof wants to lure Jenke back into the land of the living and fry him once and for all.

The boyfriend's body is then discovered and it looks plainly obvious that poor old Lucas is responsible, naturally he gets arrested.

Lucas life gets even worse (if that is possible) when the professor gets hauled into the station in a body-bag. The charge then becomes two murders...

Made before SHOCKER and it makes that turkey look positively anaemic by comparison. Most of its

effectiveness comes from having two excellent leads in the form of Brion James, who is superbly menacing (Horace Pinker, eat shit!) and also manages to put his manic laugh to good use; and Lance Henriksen, who gives the part of the tormented cop his best shot and succeeds in full, making it one of his best performances (up there with NEAR DARK and ALIENS) to date; and by having some amazingly realised special effects. Fair enough, it does borrow a bit from some of Freddy's outings but it has managed to get away from those one-liner routines in favour of a more horrific approach that packs quite a few grisly jolts!

Unfortunately, THE HORROR SHOW has been retitled to HOUSE III by some idiotic marketing people who must have thought that British punters would only hire/buy it because of the 'reputation' of the other two HOUSE clunkers - I for one would've wanted to get as far as I possibly could from them (I wonder what producer Sean Cunningham's views are on this?).

That quibble aside, and don't let it put you off, THE HORROR SHOW is recommended viewing for all horror aficionados.

PAUL J. BROWN.

HOWLING VI: THE FREAKS (1990)

Palace.

Directed by Hope Peretto.

96 mins.

HOWLING VI: THE FREAKS brings about two welcome changes: firstly, a return to form in this on-going saga of lycanthropy and, secondly, a change in style for a modern horror film - this sixth entry is really a homage to the shockers of yesteryear, most notably the likes of HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN and HOUSE OF DRACULA.

What can I say? This constantly interesting and refreshing monsterthon has it all - a Larry Talbot-like werewolf, the



HOWLING VI...

sad and lonely Ian Richards, who enters into the sleepy mid-western town of Canton Bluff in the hope of tracking down Harker (no, not Jonathan!), an ancient vampire, who after massacring Richards' entire family made him into the creature he is today.

The deadly Harker travels around under the guise of a travelling-carnival ringmaster who has with him an entourage of freaks to act at his beck and call.

The film motors along at a brisk and exciting pace and in its wake leaves a gallery of grisly and hideous sights, paving the way for a traditional-type horror finale when the two creatures, vampire and werewolf, lock fangs for a fight to the death...

What a surprise! Some very decent transformation shots (natch!), and a variation in appearance of the two monsters. Splatter-lovers should enjoy some of the other effects, especially those involving actor Antonio Fargas (remember him from 'Starsky & Hutch'?) - in one scene there is a bloody multiple stabbing and in another he bites the head off a poor unfortunate chicken... what a geek!!

To be perfectly honest, I was hoping that the **HOWLING** series had died with **PART V**, but I'm very glad that the producers persevered and delivered the goods. Nice John Bolton painted video sleeve too.
PAUL J. BROWN.

INFERNO IN SAFEHAVEN (1988)

Medusa.
Directed by Brian Thomas Jones & James McCalmont.
83 mins.

Time : 21st Century. Place : Post holocaust Earth. Groups of people are taking refuge from marauders in 'protected' areas known as 'Safehavens', which are self-reliant fortified cities.

This particular story centres around the Colt family, who manage to gain a place in 'Safehaven 186' - their problems are over, right? Wrong, think again, their problems are only just beginning...

The first thing that greets them is a barbaric hanging of two 'subversives'.

The father, Ben, lets his feelings be known and for doing so gets his family a month's detention and some fairly heavy discipline for himself - a flogging!!

However, some of the more 'sick' law-enforcers urge that the sentence isn't strong enough and want Ben sentenced to death! Luckily, Ben's son Jeff was out at the time of the initial arrest and he, along with Pierce, a freedom fighter with a bunch of rebels, plan to rid 'Safehaven 186' of its evil tortuous regime and the psychopathic ring-leaders. Bleak, dark and very violent **MAD MAX** clone that is extremely nasty and as such offers little in the way of enjoyment, which is a shame as that is all it needed to be a winner. Just a glimmer of hope and the odd ray of happiness would have been enough to have made all the murder, torture, perversity and grimness worthwhile.

Basically, the whole affair needed more space - the budget obviously only paid for one location as it's all filmed in and around one derelict building - and much more in the way of characters that you could relate to.

A few decent gore effects (impalings, bullet hits, etc.) but bugger-all else, and, if I hear the line "It's payback time" once more I think I'll scream!

PAUL J. BROWN.

KILL ME AGAIN (1990)

Rank.
Directed by John R. Dahl.
96 mins.

After committing both a robbery and a murder Fay Forrester dubs her sadistic boyfriend and accomplice over the head and makes off with 187,000 big ones.

Then in a desperate attempt to build a new life she goes to see a down-on-his-luck private detective, Jack Andrews and makes him a proposition - she explains that she has a crazy and violent boyfriend called Vince who wants to kill her and her only plan of escape is if she can fake her own death.

After some deliberation he agrees to help her and the plan is carried out.

Things go relatively smoothly but after the event Jack finds that Fay has disappeared without paying him.

This leaves the luckless detective with a murder case pinned against him, and as well as having the mob on his tale, because they think he has their cash, he has the psychopathic Vince looming in for the kill...

KILL ME AGAIN is quite an impressive attempt at recreating an old fifties-style noir-thriller with lots of low camera angles, a very striking femme-fatale, an impressive score and a plot as twisted as a corkscrew. Joanne Whalley-Kilmer is spot-on as the sensually dangerous Forrester, proving to be as worthy as Faye



Joanne Whalley-Kilmer invites you to kill her again

Dunaway in **BONNIE & CLYDE**, a film which has many comparisons to this one, and even provides a decent American accent to boot. Her real-life hubby Val Kilmer takes on the role of the detective and, sadly, proves to be the movie's major disappointment. We are supposed to believe that Jack is a drunken slob, which is very difficult when Kilmer appears too nice and cannot look anything but squeaky-clean, but to give him his dues he does try very hard and becomes more realistic as the film progresses. It is, however, the role of Vince that will prove the most interesting to **FANTASYNOPSIS** readers - played with conviction by the menacing form of Michael Madsen who simply exudes nastiness from every pore, the scene where he tortures one of Jack's buddies with a knife and lighted cigarette is very harrowing stuff indeed!

An unusual film and well worth a look.

PAUL J. BROWN

THE KILLER (1989)

Palace.
Directed by John Woo.
109 mins.

Hit-man Jeffrey Chow (Chow Yun Fat) takes on a job to blow away stacks of dudes at a nightclub but in doing so accidentally blinds Jenny (Sally Yeh), a singer.

Jeffrey feels guilty about her, but more than that he has fallen in love with her.

Six months later Chow encounters Jenny again and saves her from a mugging. He befriends her and, although he doesn't reveal the truth about who he is, offers to finance an operation to try and restore her sight.

Chow agrees to take on one last 'job', in order to raise the cash for the medical expenses, but this time his victim has Inspector Lee (Danny Lee), a super-cop, as a bodyguard.

The hits carried out and it's not long before Inspector Lee gets on the heels of Chow.

With the police now involved Chow's hirers cut up rough and not only do they refuse to pay the agreed fee but also put a contract out on him, with his best friend on the trigger!

Although Chow is deadly he isn't without emotions, as we've already seen, and in a massive gun battle he saves the life of a little girl.

Eventually the killer and the cop get locked into battle with one another and as the bullets fly and the bodies mount up, at an alarming rate, they realise that the only way out of this situation is to team up and blast the bad guys off the face of the earth...

I first caught a glimpse of this film at 'Shock Around The Clock 4' when its trailer was screened. Needless to say, what I saw whetted my appetite - but could the film match the pacing of the blood-soaked preview? The answer is, yes, and not only does it match but completely pales it into insignificance!

Produced by cult figure Tsui **ACHINESE GHOST STORY**



One of the quieter moments from **THE KILLER**

Hark, **THE KILLER** is brilliant entertainment; it's a way over the top, cliché-ridden bloodbath that moves like lightning and will most probably leave you breathless!! So much gunfire that it makes the works of Sam Peckinpah look like Disney!

PAUL J. BROWN.

THE KRAYS (1990)

RCA/Columbia.
Directed by Peter Medak.
115 mins.

A slick, sick biographical epic that delves into the lives and minds of Britain's most notorious gangland kings - Ron and Reggie, The Kray Twins.

We follow them from their schooldays, with the start of their liking for fighting, and their homelife with their doting mother, Violet.

See them beat each other to pulp in a fairground boxing booth, their assault of their National Service sergeant, and after a spot of 'advice' from Michael Elphick, their first venture into the world of ultra-violence with a vicious attack by some nasty looking sabres.

After this violent encounter the Krays get involved with their first nightclub and then form 'The Firm' and hold their meetings at mum's house, where Violet makes them tea and cakes...

Then comes the first turning point in the family, when Reg breaks away from the homosexual Ron and marries Frances - and then the penultimate nail in their coffins comes when Reg goes to pieces after Frances commits suicide.

Their final burst of terror comes in a frenzied bloodbath which eventually leads to their imprisonment - where they still are to this day.

The twins are excellently portrayed by Gary and Martin Kemp (from the pop group Spandau Ballet) and, surprisingly, are very effective, giving a rather assured air to the overall feel of the film - I must say that I am intrigued to see what they will attempt next in the acting world and how good they will be when apart?

The role of the 'innocent' Violet is taken by the reliably good Billie Whitelaw - her remarkable performance gives the story a sense of stability.

But, for me, the best piece of acting comes from Kate Hardie as the mentally tormented Frances - in just a relatively small block of screen time she is able to convey, perfectly, the feelings of pain, anguish and isolation - look out for her in the future!

On summing up, **THE KRAYS** is a very violent film, but it doesn't attempt to glamorise it in any way and this is helped by the fine standard of performers involved. Horror purists will find the action pleasing with plenty of grisly blood-letting to salivate over but even the hardest of gorehounds will end up being overcome by the overall power of some of the more moody scenes.

On a lighter note, I couldn't help raising a smile or two at the sight of Violet Kray serving tea in the upstairs room as

it looked as though the footage was lifted straight out of Ealing's **THE LADYKILLERS**! First class British drama that displays a great deal of style but is not too over-indulgent as to lose any of its gritty realism. This is powerful stuff shot in the tradition of films like **THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY** and as such should be required viewing.
PAUL J. BROWN.

MANIAC 2 - PROMO REEL (19??)

Directed by Buddy Givonazzo.
Approx 8 mins.

What an oddity: a very short burst of what will now never be seen due to the sad demise of the likeable, if sleazy, Joe Spinell. Directed by the guy who brought us the amazing **COMBAT SHOCK/AMERICAN NIGHTMARE**, this mini-epic gives us three scenes of Spinell reprising the sort of sicko character role that we've come to expect of him. From this test reel it's understandably difficult to make out much of a plot, but Spinell appears to be portraying the seriously disturbed host of a kids' TV show, a certain Mr Robby. In the first scene he mooches about his dressing room, while voices in his head play back childhood memories of abuse and fear... half his face is made up clown fashion, an eerie sight that echoes 1980's **FADE TO BLACK** (They don't make 'em like that anymore! - Eric B. li). Cut to a late night bar. Mr Robby is drinking heavily and his agent (?) expresses concern for him; they are hassled by a Hispanic character and Mr Robby snarls "I don't speak Spanish...". His agent leaves him in a semi-drunken stupor. The barman approaches Spinell, inviting him back into the kitchen for an impromptu cocaine sniffing session; bad move! When the barman confides to Mr Robby that he has been physically abusing his son to teach him not to keep watching TV, the deranged Spinell grabs him from behind, thrusting his face into a deep fat frying pan... the agonized screams of the unfortunate barman are drowned beneath the molten fat, from which his face finally emerges as a bloated, burned parody, the eyes hidden beneath puffy, swollen eyelids - eyelids which are brutally split by a large kitchen knife which Spinell thrusts into the barman's left eye-socket. Blood spurts graphically... Joe morosely stares at the blood-soaked corpse in the corner and mutters "If you can't stand the heat get out the kitchen, cookie". Mr Robby emerges into the night through a side exit; he is again approached by the same husker who annoyed him in the bar. "I don't speak Spanish" he irritably reiterates as the screen fades to black...

It can be seen from even such a short clip as this that **MANIAC 2** would have been much better than Bill Lustig's original **MANIAC** (1980) - this makes Joe's death that much more poignant. Nonetheless, this test reel is a fitting memorial to an overlooked and under-appreciated actor, who always imparted a sleazy charm to even the basest characters that he was called upon to portray throughout a sadly short career.

R.I.P. Joe - gone but never forgotten...

NIGEL BURRELL.

MANIAC COP 2 (1990)

Medusa.

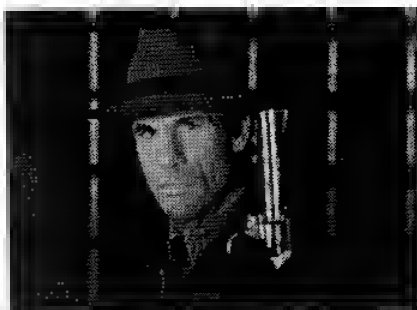
Directed by William Lustig.

83 mins.

He's back, and with a bigger budget than before even more murder and mayhem is guaranteed. Rather than a quick cash-in on the success of the first feature, writer/producer Larry Cohen has opted for the other route, namely upping the production values and budget to, as he candidly admits, "...cultivate the potential for a series of **MANIAC COP** films".

To this end the film attempts to develop several sub-plots besides the main action as well as mixing familiar faces from the first outing with new characters - including Robert **LICENCE TO KILL** Davi as a hard-bitten, cynical cop, Claudia **THE HIDDEN** Christian as a police shrink and Leo **THE ACCUSED** Rossi as "the stripper-killer", a loquacious loony who befriends the maniac cop.

Not that this leads to any noticeable drop in the action quota, and the highlights include a couple of spectacular car chases; a chainsaw-wielding Laurene Landon, who proves far more attractive than Leatherface, though not so resilient; a high body count (including a surprise demise or two); and it all leads to a bullet-riddled, blood-soaked encounter at the cop shop before the flaming finale where the maniac cop is finally put to rest... or is he? **MANIAC COP 2** has a sharp script from Larry Cohen, successfully blending black comedy with strong violence (best achieved in an early scene of a robbery at an all-



Robert Davi thinks he has a licence to kill in **MANIAC COP 2**

night store) and director Bill Lustig keeps it all moving at a brisk pace. Most of the cast perform well among the mayhem (although Leo Rossi's stripper-killer is a hopelessly misjudged attempt to make him a wacky, lovable psychotic killer!) and overall **MANIAC COP 2** provides more than enough entertainment to make the prospect of further outings for the maniac cop not wholly unappealing - but the enforced absence of Laurene Landon will be a handicap, unless there are plans to resurrect her as a sort of wo-maniac cop? (Now there's a thought, Larry...) MARK MURTON.

MIRROR, MIRROR (1990)

SGE Home Video.

Directed by Marina Sargenti.

100 mins.

An insecure black-clad gothic girl, Megan (Rainbow Harvest), moves with her Ma (Karen **ISLAND OF THE ALIVE** Black) to a new home (reportedly haunted) and school.

Megan finds it difficult acquiring new friends, but in the move she sort of inherits an old mysterious mirror in her bedroom. As time passes Megan discovers that whenever she wishes ill of people it all happens for real!

We learn through a smallish appearance by Yvonne **THE MUNSTERS** De Carlo, as an antiques dealer, that "...mirrors were used as gateways for the demons to pass into our world..." and that "...the mirror is just using her as a means to evil..."

Sure enough Megan slowly starts to succumb to the mirror's influence and as she fantasizes over it she gets fondled by a scaly clawed hand!

Then the corpses start to pile up around her at an alarming rate...

A lively and entertaining shocker that conjures up many chilling images helped largely by a decent script and a few meaty effects. Not entirely original as mirrors have featured in horror films many times before (**THE BOGEY MAN**, **FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE**, etc. and I did keep expecting Tim Curry to come busting through the glass at any moment!), but it's still effective and much better than the usual modern horror epic.

The wonderfully named Rainbow Harvest copes admirably as Megan and comes out on top as a memorable **CARRIE**-esque figure, proving to be much more than just another pretty face. She is well supported by busy Karen Black who delivers the goods reliably right up until her grisly demise via the kitchen waste-disposal unit! Don't be put off by the awful sleeve design as it bears no reflection to its contents and to coin a well worn phrase, **MIRROR, MIRROR** is definitely worth looking into! PAUL J. BROWN.

MISERY (1990)

First Independent.

Directed by Rob Reiner.

103 mins.

Novelist Paul Sheldon (James Caan) - a kind of male Catherine Cookson who has reached big success as the creator of the romantic character Misery Chastain - types the last line of a new book, away in his secluded winter retreat, has a drink and sets off for home. Sheldon is all the more pleased at finishing this particular book as it marks a return to what he would like to write, away from the demands of 'Misery'.

A few miles along the wintry roads Sheldon is suddenly faced with a raging blizzard and after several skids loses control of the car and it plummets off the road, crashing into the snow.

Sheldon is still alive but is unable to escape from his wreck and gradually blacks out.

'Fortunately' for Sheldon his 'No.1 fan', Annie Wilkes (Kathy Bates), is on hand to 'save' him and bundles him back to her isolated home.

When Sheldon finally regains consciousness he comes face to face with former nurse Annie and she informs him of his injuries, his legs are badly mangled, and also reveals how she came to be following him.

Annie says that because of the serious weather the phone lines are down and that all the roads are closed, but 'luckily' she has plenty of medical supplies in the house and wants to take care of her hero - she is obsessed by the 'Misery' books and even has a shrine in her living room!

But it's not long before the caring nurse reveals her true insane colours - after reading Sheldon's new book, which is filled with profanity, she goes wild and then, after reading the last of the 'Misery' books, in which her beloved heroine is killed off, she vents her vile anger and burns the only copy of the latest manuscript. "The main reason I've never been popular is because of my temper" she says.

Now a crippled prisoner, strapped in bed and completely reliant on the whims of a psycho, Sheldon can do nothing more than comply with her twisted demands, she orders him to resurrect the character and write 'Misery's Return'. Reluctantly, he starts to besh away at the secondhand typewriter and slowly starts to bring something, that Annie will like, into shape - she plays her Liberace records, strokes her pet pig and tells Sheldon of her love for him.

As time passes the police start to get on his trail and his legs start getting strong, which Annie also realises and thinking that he will soon up and leave she sets about him with a sledgehammer...

An excellent combination of talent and skill have been pulled together to produce what is probably the best Stephen King adaptation to date - director Reiner having already garnered critical acclaim for King's **STANDBYME** - with a taut screenplay by William Goldman and top class acting (make that Oscar winning in Kathy Bates' case) from the leads. **MISERY** marks a significant career point for Caan who has been on a

downward streak for longer than he can care to remember and performs admirably, down-playing the very black humour to perfection. His performance is all the more remarkable when you consider that for most of the movie he is acting whilst laying flat on his back! Now, what about that Oscar for Bates? True, she is exceptional as the tubby tormentor and is able to display her changing moods in a believable manner - Reiner makes good use of her terrifying close-ups - but I have my doubts as to whether the Academy would have honoured her against a stronger field?

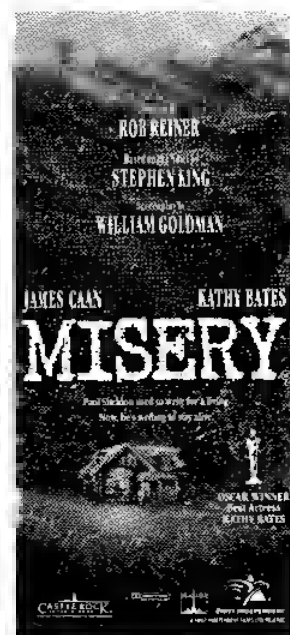
An overall success but during my viewing I kept being reminded, too much, of Clint Eastwood's **THE BEGUILLED**, don't let that put you off though as **MISERY** is one emotion you won't be displaying after sitting through this film.

PAUL J. BROWN.

MOM (1989)

Entertainment In Video.

Directed by Patrick Rand.





Every boy just loves his MOM!

91 mins.

Brion James plays a character by the name of Nestor Duvalier who gets propositioned by a girl at a bus-stop and promptly drags her off the roadside, transforms himself into a hideous demon and chomps his way into her warm flesh!

Police reports on the TV state that this is the third such killing and that all the women were pregnant.

Enter onto the scene TV reporter Clay Dwyer (Mark Thomas Miller) announcing to his doting mother Emily (Jeanne Bates) that he and his girlfriend are expecting a baby.

Little old Emily has a spare room and advertises for a lodger - guess who appears wanting the room, yep, that's right, Nestor Duvalier, posing as a blind man (why oh why someone would rent a room to a creep like this I'll never know...) back to the plot, he settles in and Emily makes him a welcome dinner, but Nestor gets mad and chows down on her!

Clay arrives home to see his mum because she hasn't returned his phone calls. Emily isn't dead though, it seems she has been transformed into a female version of Nestor and he's been caring for her and getting her used to her new way of eating - by letting her 'tuck' into a local visiting repairman in her sick bed!

As time passes the local body-count continues to rise, but the police believe they are after a crazed serial-killer.

Clay is very wary of Nestor and follows him when he takes Emily out for a stroll - he is then shocked when he sees the pair of them 'befriend' a street-bum, stuff him in an

alleyway and promptly devour the poor guy.

Clay confronts the two of them and ends up doing battle with Nestor and, surprisingly, manages to destroy him, but this still leaves the little problem of his cannibalistic mum to contend with! Clay settles back down to 'normal' family life but mum is having a hard time trying to get used to the bars at her bedroom windows and having to wear shades in the daylight! Eventually she is unable to control her desires and making her escape heads off to her last 'feeding' place.

Things go terribly wrong for her - instead of picking on a tramp she selects an undercover cop, who dies from a fall in the struggle.

Clay manages to get her away before the police arrive, but she is still drooling at the mouth for fresh flesh and is getting weaker and more ill each day... Just how long can she go on and how much more can poor Clay take - he can't sleep, can't think, he loses his job, his girl - who'd have the worries of flesh-eating parent!?

There's only one thing to do, he must give her 'food'... Well, whaddya know, MOM is a lively **RABID GRANNIES**-type affair with a touch of 'Red Riding Hood' thrown in for good measure. One moment it's too daft for words, and the next is quite witty, gory and macabre with the leads playing it with total conviction.

The effects are handled well and if you want an idea of what the make-up is like just check out the eye-catching sleeve and you'll see what I mean.

On the whole it's cheap trash, but it's the kind of trash that has those endearing qualities that will definitely gain it a

lan following.

Love it to death and as Norman says, "A man's best friend is his mother!"

PAUL J. BROWN.

THE NIGHT STALKER (1985)

Vestron Video.

Directed by Max Klevan.

91 mins.

Prostitutes are getting their necks snapped neatly in two by a twisted son-of-a-bitch with a penchant for the supernatural and eventually two tough cops, the alcoholic Striker (Charles **THE BLUES BROTHERS** Napier) and his buddy, Garratt, get assigned to the case.

The killings continue, which is extremely bad news for Garratt, he also gets on the wrong side of the psycho, who chants oriental lines as he goes about his grisly task. This is no ordinary killer, he seems to be gaining strength from each slaying and bullets have no effect on him whatsoever!

For messing up on duty and not being around to save his pal, through drink, Striker is put on suspension.

Time passes, the killer striking again and again.

Eventually, Striker dries out and beats the booze... he's back and ready to kick butt!

An interesting and, at times, nasty variation on the well-used sicko-psycho routine which moves along at a fair pace but is hampered by some gaping plot holes and by having a slob for a hero - Napier has about as much charisma as a dump-truck!

The part of the killer is played by that **MANIAC COP** himself, Robert Z'Dar, and he is a good villain, his chiselled features and his cast iron body make him a formidable force to contend with.

However, the killer's background is glossed over far too quickly which is a crying shame as it would have made excellent viewing. The way in which it is explained looks almost like an after-thought.

Fans of **TWIN PEAKS** should be interested to hear that Joan Chen appears briefly as an oriental hooker!

Not quite as bad as I've made it sound, but I for one will definitely heed to the sleeve blurb - "You'll only see him once"!!!

PAUL J. BROWN.



Charles Napier looking set to kick butt!

NIKITA (1990)

Palace Video.

Directed by Luc Besson.

111 mins.

The title belongs to a twenty-year old female junkie who is mysteriously 'saved' from a life-sentence for murder by the government in exchange for "serving her country".

She agrees and undergoes a long and rigorous training and conditioning programme.

Then, on her twenty-third birthday, she finds out exactly what it is she has been trained for - a ruthless and deadly assassin!

She is then made to perform a killing and make good her escape as her final test to see if she has 'made the grade'. After passing the test with flying colours, Nikita is let loose on the outside world.

Six months pass and she is leading a relatively 'normal' life, then one day the phone rings and she immediately responds to a code word...

An explosive, high-octane and intelligent thriller that mixes cyberpunk attitudes with art-house dramatics and adds a hefty dose of **GOODFATHER**-esque violence for good measure.

Ann Parillaud gives a completely compelling performance as Nikita and really deserves to be commended for her characterisation of the stylised killer.

Masterfully directed by Luc **SUBWAY** Besson, **NIKITA** is always good to look at. The pacing never lets up and the plot is so original that even if you hate subtitles I'll defy you to even notice them here (Palace have also presented it in the letter-boxed format - well done guys!).

Totally outstanding!!

PAUL J. BROWN.

OUTCAST (1990)

New World Video.

Directed by Roman Buchok.

94 mins.

Poor old Henry, a drunken slob, ruled by his sadistic deacon stepfather who beats him regularly, and continually ridiculed by his contemporaries, flees home after attempting to torch his step-pa to death. But before leaving he has a strange encounter with a man who shows him some tattoos and then mysteriously disappears.

Alone in the big city, Henry is forced to scrounge, steal and sleep rough just to survive... After getting a kicking from some friendly neighbourhood cops he strikes up a 'friendship' with a bunch of thieves who trick him into doing their dirty work - he beats up an old lady while robbing a store, gets arrested and is sent to jail.

Two years later, in a drunken state he attempts suicide by stepping out in front of a van but is 'saved' by the same mysterious gent with the tattoos, who then proceeds to take Henry to a strange place, locks the door and leaves him to dry out.

The stranger is in fact the Devil and he offers Henry 'the power over all men' - he must choose whether to follow the Devil or to return to his 'normal' existence.

After first resisting, Henry finally agrees to follow his 'saviour' and accepts a '666' tattoo on his chest - he is now the Anti-Christ and has the power to 'take a life or spare a life', he follows his own rules, the only thing he must never do is 'create life'!

With his new personality and his new outlook on 'life' he

sets out to take revenge on all the scum-suckers that wronged him in the past.

Henry ploughs through his hit-list with ease, which is leaving the police completely baffled as to the cause. They become so puzzled that they enlist the help of a psychic to try and help them.

Everything is going perfectly for Henry, he has gone from an worthless vagrant to a top business executive - there is however a problem, he has failed to realise that he is about to become a father...

A neat little thriller that works fairly well, even if the lead actor does come across as a real jerk, and has enough nasty moments and gruesome effects to keep the average gorehound's corpuscles bubbling - check these out: a pool-ball embedded in an eye; a car running over a leg; self-inflicted sword-swallowing and some sucker slicing up his own groin with a chainsaw!

The script (written by the director) is a little on the weak side and the ending is somewhat of a let down, but, on the whole, I found it quite lively and an interesting addition to the realms of supernatural cinema.

PAUL J. BROWN.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (1989)

Castle Pictures.

Directed by Dwight H. Little.

91 mins.

Yet another attempt at filming Gaston Leroux's famous novel, this one adding some 80's gore and being topped and tailed by scenes in modern Manhattan.

Receiving a blow on the head at an audition, Christine Day (Jill Schoelen) finds herself 'transported' back to an opera house in Victorian London - where the main body of the action takes place, although it was actually filmed in Hungary on sets left over from **THE THREEPENNY OPERA** - where she is the understudy to the famous diva, Carlotta (Stephanie Lawrence). On the night of the opening performance a mystery voice tells Christine that she will be the star of the show - the voice belongs to Erik Destler, the Phantom of the Opera (Robert Englund) who, we learn in a flashback, sold his soul to the devil so that he might be loved for his music; a satanic dwarf then leaves



Robert Englund tries out some new make-up



Jill Schoelen as the object of the Phantom's desire

him hideously scared so that it's only his music that will be loved, leading him to commit murder so he can sew the victims' flesh onto his face to hide his deformities (all shown in unflinching, wince-making close-ups).

Back in her dressing room, Carlotta is preparing for her performance, but before she even has time for a quick chorus of 'I Know What I Like In Your Wardrobe' she suffers such a terrible shock that she is rendered completely speechless. Christine takes her place and is a big hit - there are one or two dissenting voices, including an eminent critic, but he is quickly and ruthlessly silenced by The Phantom. The Phantom now reveals himself to Christine and lures her to his lair where he tells her of his plans for them to make sweet music together. Despite her resistance his influence over her increases...

Later at a masked ball, the police investigating the deaths at the theatre mingle with the stars of the show in the hope of spotting the killer, but the party is interrupted by the discovery of something nasty in the soup and in the confusion The Phantom abducts Christine, taking her to his hideaway in the sewers under the theatre. The police follow them underground and are soon being dispatched in various gruesome ways by The Phantom, eventually leading to a showdown in his candle-lit lair. Then it's back to present day Manhattan for a short coda that leaves the way open for the proposed sequel **THE PHANTOM OF MANHATTAN**.

This **PHANTOM**... proves to be a very pleasant surprise, mixing Leroux's classic tale with some gory modern horror touches. It's all confidently directed by Dwight **HALLOWEEN 4** Little and boasts superb costumes (worth the Oscar nomination they surely would have got in any other genre), classy cinematography from Elmer Ragalyi, impressive and suitably gruesome make-up effects from Kevin **A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2-4** Yegher and strong performances from the leads. As The Phantom Robert Englund seems to be developing a real screen presence and is equally impressive in scenes where The Phantom swells with pride during Christine's first performance as he is when ruthlessly dispatching some muggers foolish enough to cross his path (although he is undermined somewhat by the ill-judged attempts to make The Phantom too Freddy-like with some 1980's-type one-liners); while Jill Schoelen makes an ideal subject for The Phantom's obsessive devotions (she mimes well too).

The only weak link here is the script which takes away key scenes from the original story without really offering anything in their place, and perhaps the whole thing is a bit slow for hardened gorehounds while there's likely to be too much blood (from severed heads to slashed throats) for the average viewer; but it should certainly find an audience on video (where gore-seekers can simply fast-forward through the slower parts).

Well worth a look and not at all what you'd expect from a film bearing the name Menahem Golan.

MARK MURTON.

PIN (1988)

New World Video.

Directed by Sandor Stern.

99 mins.

Two sheltered kids, Leon and Ursula, lead a very strange life being brought up by their very houseproud mother and their weirdo doctor father, who talks to his kids through 'Pin', an anatomical dummy that he keeps in his office.

As time goes on and the kids become older, Leon takes on a closer relationship with Pin until, eventually, the boy gets 'answers' from it and from then on the dummy offers him all sorts of advice on life.

Then one day, the doctor walks in and catches Leon talking to Pin. The doc realises that something is wrong



Don't play with chainsaws - bloody goings-on in **OUTCAST**

and bundles the dummy into his car just as he and his wife are leaving for a business trip. Then a fatal car crash occurs with Pin being the only 'survivor'.

Needless to say, the kids are not too upset by the news and subsequently inherit quite a substantial estate - but things soon get messed up again when an aunt comes to stay with them. Leon gets mightily pissed-off and uses Pin to scare her weak heart to death!

Leon has now reached the point where Pin is ruling his life, leaving poor Ursula afraid of him. Pin lives in the house, wears their father's clothes and now sports a 'real' face complete with hair!

Ursula starts to develop her own life: she gets a job at the local library, gets a steady boyfriend and starts to generally enjoy herself. Eventually, Leon asks his sister to bring her boyfriend (Stan) over for dinner.

Stan meets Pin, Leon even reads Stan some of his poetry and all appears to be going well... then Leon overhears Stan saying that he definitely needs psychiatric help and that his poetry is sick. Ursula understands what is wrong with her brother but says that she could never see her brother locked away in a hospital.

Leon and Pin can't stand the thought of Stan any longer, so 'they' arrange for him to come visiting when Ursula is out at work...

AMITYVILLE HORROR scripter, Sander Stern, shows style, pace and originality with this cinematic excursion into psychosis. A great cast, headed by David Hewlett as Leon, Cyndy Preston as Ursula and Terry THE STEPFATHER O'Quinn as the doctor, display much talent making it highly recommended viewing indeed. Hewlett has the added advantage of bearing a striking resemblance to O'Quinn which makes it all the more chilling - a fine performance.

Upon its initial video release this film slipped by most viewers completely unnoticed, including me - now it has been re-released on sell-through to all, don't be in two minds about this one, buy it today!

PAUL J. BROWN.



A family photo from PIN

RED BLOODED AMERICAN GIRL (1990)

20.20 Vision.

Directed by David Blyth.

89 mins.

Dr. Alcore (Christopher Plummer), noted scientist and head of the Life Reach Medical Research Centre, recruits, for AIDS study, the brilliant but outcasted young scientist, Owen Urban (Andrew Stevens). Owen is then given a vast amount of cash for joining.

The actual research centre is an enormous building protected by every conceivable form of electronic security device. Owen is shown around but is kept away from 'restricted' areas. He meets Paula (Heather Thomas), a gorgeous volunteer at the centre, and becomes infatuated with her.

Paula is then witness to the more sinister and darker side of the place when she sees how one of the 'patients' is (mis)treated. She quits her job and Owen goes off after her. He manages to get her to go back with him later that night so that he can investigate her strange sounding claims.

Once inside a 'restricted' area Paula gets bitten and becomes infected with a deadly virus, initiated and carried by Dr. Alcore - a strange form of vampirism!

Owen confronts Alcore and all is revealed. Meanwhile, Paula is to be seen strutting suburbia looking for blood. Owen frantically searches for a cure, but with time running out there is only one thing he can do...

It all gets off to an interesting start with a semi-decent plot and good characters, but with the arrival of the middle portion of the film it becomes too predictable and tame



In the lust for eternal life, there will always be sacrifices...

Interesting sleeve, shame about the film!

with the sexually charged vampires not being allowed to go overboard. Then by the time we reach the ending the story has moved into silly territory with an abysmal finish to kill it dead.

Andrew THE FURY Stevens, looking a little older around the gills, does reasonably well, Heather Thomas looks terrific but can't act and Christopher Plummer just goes through the motions - his character could have been lifted from a number of his other movies (DREAMSCAPE especially) - and he seems to be making a bad job at pretending that he is enjoying his work!

Best scene involves Thomas 'sucking' a male vampire to death with the victim savouring every moment!

A good title but ultimately fairly anaemic.

PAUL J. BROWN.

RETURN OF THE FAMILY MAN (1989)



"I'm back"

MGM/UA Home Video.

Directed by John Murlowski.

88 mins.

Low budget thrills and laughter (unintentional) that depict the homecoming of one of America's most notorious mass-murderers, known as 'The Family Man' (named after his penchant for slicing up entire families!), when he escapes from a prison bus (shades of ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13) after the guards get him pissed-off.

Intertwined with this plot are two groups of teen-cornheads who get conned into hiring a backwoods house, by a tour company, which turns out to be the Family Man's old haunt and yes, you've guessed it, he's heading home...

Not it the slightest bit scary but it is damn funny in places! The gruesome killings and the wacky murderer himself (played by Ron Smerczak) are the film's highlights. About an hour in the mood really hots up for the better with the killer on psychotic overload (especially when he gets torched!) and the gang having to resort to ingenious ways of thwarting him.

No classic but it'll liven up a Friday night!

PAUL J. BROWN.

SANTA SANGRE (1989)

Palace Video.

Directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky.

123 mins.

SANTA SANGRE tells the story of Fenix (Axel Jodorowsky), a circus mime artist/magician who, when young, was witness to acts of horrendous violence - his religious fanatic mother has her arms sliced off by his alcoholic, knife-throwing, womanising father after she had apprehended him in an uncompromising position with the tattooed lady and then promptly punished him by throwing acid at his genitalia! As if that wasn't enough, the father then slices his own throat in front of the poor boy! Years later, with Fenix a grown man but locked in a sanatorium, he once again finds his mother and through a strange sequence of events becomes her arms in a visually strange form of mime act, which even continues off stage.

His mother, Concha (Blancha Guerra), has an almost hypnotic control over him and she is able to command him to murder any woman that threatens their relationship. His first port of call is at the home of the tattooed lady, which also happens to be the abode of a poor deaf-mute girl that he loved as a boy.

Can his love for her triumph over his mother's tremendous power and will the killing stop?

Surreal, weird, compelling, captivating... I could go on but I don't want to leave you with a boring list of superlatives, **SANTA SANGRE** is by far the most bizarre film I have ever seen! I was surprised by the quality, amazed at the camera work, shocked by the violence (there is a stabbing scene that even pales the opening of SUSPIRIA!) and stunned by the acting ability of Jodorowsky's son as Fenix - this is award winning stuff I can tell you!

A myriad of original ideas and wonderful images painted in eye-pleasing colours - scenes that will be forever lodged in my mind include: the painful tattooing of the young Fenix (of a Phoenix) by his father; the death and subsequent funeral of the circus elephant; a graveyard sequence with all the murder victims rising from the ground; and Fenix's obsessive viewings of THE INVISIBLE MAN where he mimes every line to perfection and then attempts to create his own invisibility potion with which to attempt to hide. Produced by Claudio Argento, with some of his brother's amazing photographic trademarks shining through, this has got to be one of the visual treats of Eighties.

Jodorowsky's finest and a masterpiece of modern horror - strongly recommended.

PAUL J. BROWN.

SGHIZO (1989)

Medusa.

Directed by Manny Coto.

84 mins.

As a boy Chris Hayden mysteriously escaped death when his entire family was murdered. Now a young man, he suffers recurring nightmares and in an attempt to get to the bottom of what his archaeologist father was unearthing (at the time of his grisly demise), he sets off for Yugoslavia with his journalist buddies.

They arrive at an old monastery and start to delve deep into the seemingly endless catacombs that belonged to a seductive ten-year old Prince who, according to legend, sold his twisted soul to an ancient Slavic demon.

Needless to say, it's not long before Hayden finds himself



Armless but deadly - SANTA SANGRE

being tormented by his boyhood imaginary friend (really the Prince!) and gets drawn into a world of madness. Then, once inside the 'playroom', Hayden takes on a murderous personality... Exceptionally gory in places, with a swinging pick-axe plus a really meaty decapitation by gunfire, and effective in the horror/suspense stakes, **SCHIZO** proves to be a thoroughly enjoyable affair with a good build-up, decent acting and neat crisp direction conjuring up just the right air of menace. This is all fine until we reach a sequence involving a wildy over-the-top mummified animatronic ten-year old when the director moves into the done-to-death wisecrack routine which, expectedly, has disastrous results. But, luckily, the film gathers momentum again for



SCHIZO

the great gore-laden climax. So, apart from the un-original title and a brief lapse in concentration this schizophrenic exercise in terror proves to be quite watchable and gets the thumbs up from this reviewer.
PAUL J. BROWN.

SHADOWS RUN BLACK (1984)

Vestron.
Directed by Howard Heard.
85 mins.
A couple having a romp in the woods get slaughtered by a prowler known as 'The Black Angel' and one by one (groan!) other college co-eds start dropping like flies... you know the rest, right? The killer in this dog looks a lot like our very own real-life sicko 'The Black Panther' (ie. black balaclava) and he's working his way through a chopping list with all the usual stalk and slash trademarks, even phoning his victims before he kills them (wow, how original!?). This title was picked up by Troma in the States and as such I was prepared to sit through the boredom and the dime-store dramatics in the hope of some cheap but meaty effects... I should have guessed, it's virtually bloodless! Final verdict: slower than treacle, no suspense and should only be viewed by T&A fans as their is a fair amount of nudity on display and for people who are curious to see what an actor of Kevin Costner's quality cut his teeth on
PAUL J. BROWN.

THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS (1990)

Orion.
Directed by Jonathan Demme.
119 mins.

Silence was the last thing that greeted the release of Jonathan Demme's film version of the second book by Thomas Harris to feature the character of Dr. Hannibal Lecter, and it was rewarded with a record opening week (until the next one) at the UK box office amid much talk of Oscars all round. Which was certainly a marked contrast to the fate of the film of the first of Harris' books featuring Dr. Lecter ('**RED DRAGON**' filmed as **MANHUNTER**) which crept out almost unnoticed and soon took up its place on video store shelves (where you can now find it being pushed as 'The prequel to **THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS**' (when recently screened on US TV it was retitled as **RED DRAGON : THE PURSUIT OF HANNIBAL LECTER** - Ed!)).

Unlike some previous over-hyped films, however, **SILENCE** largely justifies the fuss, offering a gripping psycho-thriller with several of the best performances to be seen this year in any genre, enabling it to match in commercial terms the cult success of its predecessor, and this despite what seems to be an active attempt to sever all links with **MANHUNTER** with Dr. Lecter using the four year hiatus between the two films to transform himself from Brian Cox into Anthony Hopkins (via John Hurt who would have been offered the role had Gene Hackman gone ahead with his version after he initially acquired the film rights) and also taking the opportunity to relocate and redecorate his cell (this changing of identity is also adopted by minor characters who also appeared in **MANHUNTER** and return here).

Predictably, it's the performance of Anthony Hopkins that has garnered most of the praise and publicity, but my disquiet expressed in last Issue's **MANHUNTER** feature over the removal of Brian Cox from the Lecter role seems to have been borne out with Hopkins giving a far showier performance than Cox which may have terrified audiences on both sides of the Atlantic but seems far removed from the Lecter of the novels (and **MANHUNTER**). What makes Lecter such a unique and memorable modern horror monster is his civility and superior intellect, enabling him to get inside his chosen prey's mind and turn it inside out before they even know it's happening, but this interpretation makes him much more of a traditional, hissable movie villain who uses wild-eyed stares and taunts to unsettle FBI trainee Clarice Starling when just being in his presence should be enough to do that - but it is a great portrayal of a psychotic killer (it's just not the



SHADOWS RUN BLACK

real/Lecter), and Anthony Hopkins is a great actor, so no one should begrudge him any awards that come his (and our favourite genre's) way.

Happily, no such accusations of over-playing can be levelled at Jodie Foster who gives a remarkable performance of great range and subtlety in the role of Clarence, dodging (unsuccessfully) flying semen at the start and (successfully) flying bullets at the end as she heads (quite correctly) for another certain Oscar nomination and quite possibly her second award.

Also noteworthy are Scott Glenn, almost unrecognisable in the role of FBI chief Jack Crawford, and Ted Levine who, even though Anthony Hopkins' Lecter holds centre stage for over half of the film, still manages to make 'Buffalo Bill' a memorable and all too believable character in his own right; unfortunately the same can't be said for Bill's future fashion statement, Senator's daughter Catherine Martin (a spirited performance from Brooke Smith), a fully rounded (no pun intended) and sympathetic character in the book but here she suffers due to the concentration of scenes featuring Lecter leaving her too few scenes to establish herself and so fully involve us in her plight.

SILENCE is yet another change in direction, and another step forward, for Demme in his increasingly varied and impressive list of credits, and while he might not have seemed the most obvious choice to direct such a project he does a magnificent job, holding us spellbound whether it's a major set piece or a fairly static scene like the tightly framed exchanges between Lecter and Starling where he is quite prepared just to let his camera observe the players. And he's backed up on all sides by Tak Fujimoto's superb cinematography; Kristi Zea's excellent production designs, especially the sets for Bill's abominable abode (where the brief glimpse we get into his bathroom suggests that bath-night with Bill would be an unforgettable experience); Howard Shore's brilliant score (along with some interesting choices for the soundtrack - I didn't know Hollywood was even aware of the existence of The (mighty) Fall); and some stylish editing from Craig McKay, although the much discussed moment during the climax, applauded by some, derided by others, is too clever for its own good, unnecessarily drawing attention to itself when surely the mark of great editing is that it remains quietly impressive, unobtrusively allowing the film to flow seamlessly and (seemingly) effortlessly (see **GOODFELLAS**) - and did anyone else spot that mic-shot in a couple of scenes?

Anyhow, it is a great film of a great book - and there's still plenty to enjoy even for those familiar with the book, including the infra-red finale which transfers brilliantly from page to screen and provides some of the tensest scenes of recent cinema - making it a must-see movie for genre fans who will undoubtedly be adding it to their list of the year's finest.

MARK MURTON.

SLAUGHTERHOUSE (1987)

Braveworld.
Directed by Rick Rosenthal.
80 mins.

In the prologue we see a couple of horny teens, scouting for a possible home-made-horror-film location, getting hacked up by a flabby backwoods slaughterer with a fleshy cleaver.

Then some barf-inducing real-life pig slaughter footage is screened as the credits roll by!

Back to the story... the setting for this **TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE** done is an old run-down hog-slaughtering house, 'Bacon & Sons', that used to be hugely successful, but with the owner, Les Bacon, refusing to go mechanised (as his biggest rival has done) he is faced with eviction. Poor old Les and his hog-lovin', hulking, retarded son, Buddy, have just thirty days to get out. On discovering the two bodies in the slaughterhouse of 'Les' remarks, "... well, at least you made clean cuts!"

Determined to get revenge on those whom he thinks have tried to ruin him, Les lures them all up the slaughterhouse whilst Buddy sharpens his blade! Meanwhile, more kids are back, still after that perfect location.

It seems that the slaughterhouse is back in business... Because it borrows too much from Hooper's classic it fails to generate any real power but is still a reasonable tale that should keep most gorefiends glued to the screen - although cut, there are still one or two splatery moments to be found (a severed spurting head and another head being squashed under a car wheel!).

Unfortunately none of the characters are that memorable (although the retarded Buddy is suitably repelling) and

nothing outstanding ever happens.

All in all, it's a fair attempt at recreating some good old fashioned horror and because of that it manages to be reasonably palatable (apart from that real footage at the beginning!). Not worth buying for your collection but it's worth a look if you can borrow a copy.

PAUL J. BROWN.

SONNY BOY (1988)

Entertainment In Video.
Directed by Robert Martin Carroll.
99 mins.

The occasional urge to do something totally off-the-wall must be firmly embedded in the Carradine family genes. John Carradine was renowned for his choice of the bizarre as well as the great movies throughout his marathon career, and David is clearly looking to build up a similar reputation. Well, he's got a way to go with the 'great' movies but, with **SONNY BOY**, David Carradine has made a movie which is guaranteed to make jaws drop with disbelief.

Slue, played in typically lumbering fashion by Paul L. Smith, fences stolen goods from a dilapidated ranch on the Mexican border where he lives with his wife Pearl. For no discernible reason Pearl is played throughout the movie by Carradine in varying states of dishevelled drag (look, I told you this was bizarre) and, when the incompetent Weasel (Bred Douiri) turns up in a stolen car with a six-month-old baby hidden on the back seat, Pearl sees the opportunity to add 'Sonny Boy' to the family.

Slue, initially torn between feeding the kid to the hogs or adding him to the 'For Sale' catalogue, decides instead to bring up Sonny Boy as a conscience-free thief and killer. He is toughened-up by being dragged along the road at the end of a rope tied to the back of a car, scorched in a ring of fire, permanently locked up in a dark old grain silo and, in a scene which will have harassed parents wondering why they never thought of the idea, Sonny Boy has his tongue cut out as a sixth-birthday present. So far, so strange. But once we get used to seeing Carradine in drag and listening to Sonny Boy's whining voice-overs, the storyline from here on is simply not strong enough to hold the attention, and there is a certain predictability about Sonny Boy's escape, his fleeting romance and the local townspeople's revolt which leaves Slue and Pearl dead in the ashes of their burnt-out ranch. Still, the screenplay by Graeme Whiffler gives Paul L. Smith some nice one-liners, our sympathy is held throughout by the cruelly abused, but psychotic, Sonny Boy (played by the unknown Michael Griffin), and there is some impressive photography by Roberto D'Etorre Piazzoli whose previous track record included the best forgotten **PIRANHA II** and the awful **BEYOND THE DOOR**. Director Robert Martin Carroll is, however, unable to sustain the movie's initial promise and the none-too-subtle hand of producer Ovidio G. Assonitis (**MADHOUSE**, **THE CURSE**, **THE VISITOR** and **PIRANHA II**) is soon apparent.

David Carradine fans will, of course, find **SONNY BOY** irresistible and lovers of awful lyrics will treasure Carradine's theme song ("Maybe there's gold at the end of this rainbow. And maybe it's paint. And maybe it ain't"). The rest of us, however, will merely file it under 'Intriguing failure'.

GLYN WILLIAMS.

SPIDER BABY (1964)

Home Video Suppliers.
Directed by Jack Hill.
80 mins.

A hillbilly family suffers from the medical curse 'Merye's Syndrome', which causes them to regress mentally after they reach the age of ten - the older they are, the more retarded they grow, to the point where some clan members actually achieve a pre-natal stage of dark madness reputed to drive them to savage cannibalism.

Stunningly acted, highly imaginative backwoods shocker from Hill whose only other claims to fame are his sacking by Roger Corman while directing **TRACK OF THE VAMPIRE**, and the quartet of Mexican-financed pictures he shot with an ailing Boris Karloff at the end of the great man's life. **SPIDER BABY** itself languished in obscurity for years - only receiving its first U.S. screenings in 1968, it became notorious largely amongst critics who hadn't seen it, due to its lurid alternative titles **THE LIVER EATERS** and **CANNIBAL ORGY**, and was only re-discovered and initially acclaimed as an unsung masterwork of the macabre by Jim Morton in the 'Re/Search' publication 'Incredibly Strange Films', which

devoted an entire chapter to the movie. Since then it's become a 'must see' item on the lists of every genre completist worth their salt, and those lucky enough to view copies have unanimously agreed that **SPIDER BABY** lives up to its reputation.

Lon Chaney Jr. gives a touching, tender, understanding performance as the Merye's loyal chauffeur/retainer, faithfully keeping his promise to the late family patriarch to watch over the children, two provocative, flirty girls and bald, gibbering adult baby Ralph (Sid Haig, totally unrecognisable and looking not unlike the microcephaly victim in Tod Browning's **FREAKS**); and the ensemble playing is flawless, making our belief in the effects of this bizarre disease unquestioning.

The Spider Baby herself is one of horror's most extraordinary 'monsters', Jill Banner wearing her dark tresses in bunches, skipping about in playfully girlish manner like a demented Lolita, emerging from her vacant infantile state only to feed her pet tarantulas 'Winkled' and 'Bernie' or to 'play spider' herself - an activity which involves luring and trapping a helpless male victim, near-seducing him, wrapping him in latticework and delivering the fatal 'sting' with a pair of gleaming carving knives.

The centrepiece of this unique, disconcerting horror drama comes when the Merye's treat their money-grabbing relatives and a legal representative to a banquet in the dining-room of their hill-top mansion - on the menu is a scrawny 'rabbit', in reality a house cat snagged by Ralph, a selection of dubious fungi, and a disgusting tar-like gloop which is gobbled up with enthusiasm, and which Chaney warns Quinn Redeker off with the comment "Oh, no! You wouldn't want any of that, sir!". The climax, with Chaney deciding the time has come to obliterate his killer charges once and for all, with various mystery 'aunts' and 'uncles' emerging from the cellar as he applies a match to the Merye's 'naw toy' - a bundle of gelignite - is one of the most heart-breaking in cinema. Lon acting out of his skin in a way not witnessed since 1939's triumphant **OFFICE AND MEN**. If this movie were better known and less difficult to obtain, Chaney's shaky reputation would surely receive an enormous boost. A magnificent performance - and wait till you hear Lon belting out the theme tune, a real rock 'n' roll stomper! **DARRELL BUXTON.**

TERMINATOR 2 : JUDGEMENT DAY (1991)

Guild.
Directed by James Cameron.
136 mins.

Just occasionally along comes a film that is guaranteed a place in the history of cinema simply on the strength of the new standards of excellence it sets in the field of special visual effects. **STAR WARS** set the ball rolling for such films in the modern era, followed a few years later by **ALIEN** which provided a perfect finish to the 1970's; in the 1980's **THE THING** was king and now **TERMINATOR 2** joins that select band of ground-breaking films, moving the craft another stage forward.

And if that sounds like a load of pretentious tosh I make no apologies because this is one of those all too rare occasions when you leave the cinema knowing you've just witnessed a major movie EVENT.

But, like the above-named films (and unlike the self-consciously showy **TOTAL RECALL**), **TERMINATOR 2** is far more than just another sci-fi splx extravaganza, it's also a gripping, ripping thriller, dynamically edited, with superb stunts (like the splx, top of the range) and an interesting, involving story, with some nice touches of sardonic humour, to hang it all on.

And yet the early signs weren't particularly promising, first there was the ever-spiralling budget (no small part of which was spent before a foot of film had even been shot just acquiring the rights to make a sequel and the services of the Big Man himself, Arnold Schwarzenegger), then there was the news that this time out Arnie was to be presented as a more concerned cyborg (on the face of it an oxymoron to rival 'Caring Conservatism'), plus the potential burden of a ten-year-old as one of the lead characters (wot, no cute puppy?), along with the usual fear that the law of diminishing returns so often associated with sequels would once again come into play, but all such concerns are quickly dispelled by the finished product, both artistically and financially with that mega-budget being recouped, and then some, in the first few weeks of release - whatever the final cost actually was (it \$88m is admitted to then it probably did top \$100m) it sure as hell looks like a \$100m movie!

Described by director and co-writer James Cameron as...



T2 - motoring into movie history

"a violent movie about peace" the story picks up Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) ten years after the first film, now confined to a mental institution due to her insistence that she has seen the future and knows what the world will end, while her son John (Edward Furlong) is living with foster parents, but they are soon to be re-united in a life or death struggle against an advanced T-1000 Terminator (Robert Patrick) sent by the machine rulers of future Earth, set to arrive ten years after the original T-101 in case that one failed in its mission - made of liquid metal and able to transform itself into almost any shape at will, the T-1000 features in some truly awe-inspiring scenes which utilize the technology Cameron used so sparingly but spectacularly in *THE ABYSS*, here honed to perfection and perfectly integrated into the framework of the story as one amazing scene follows another. Meanwhile, the resistance have also sent a captured T-101 Terminator (Schwarzenegger) to arrive at the same time as the T-1000 but programmed to protect the young John Connor; and as if avoiding the terrifying T-1000 doesn't give the men enough to do, Sarah, John and their protector Terminator too, set about tracking down Miles Dyson (Joe Morton), the man who will invent the computer program that will lead to the rise of the robots...

TERMINATOR 2 is undeniably an extremely violent film, but never in the way of a **ROBOCOP 2** where the endless, mindless death and destruction eventually numbs the viewer into submission and even boredom, here it's never dwelt on or glorified in and in the one scene where it looked like it might have been those nice people at the BBFC have kindly snipped 8 seconds to spare our sensibilities (which in no way makes it the '15' certificate it was then granted) - although whether Cameron's message about the value of human life actually gets

through is debatable, the audience I saw the film with seemed to revel in every bullet loosed and body dropped.

Still, **TERMINATOR 2** is unquestionably a personal triumph for James Cameron. After the commercial failure of his underwater epic *THE ABYSS* the pressure was certainly on, but his return to terra firma and the terra familiar of his 1984 cult classic is an unqualified success, easily seeing off all those who might challenge for his crown as Hollywood's premiere action orchestrator (there's even a mini *DIE HARD* along the way just to prove the point), offering laut

direction and perfect pacing and as a result the film's 136 minutes just fly by.

Cameron is also well-served by his cast, with Edward Furlong proving a pleasant surprise, a newcomer to films he consequently gives a very naturalistic performance, and Joe *THE BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET* Morton shines in his scenes as Miles Dyson, while Robert Patrick is wonderfully menacing as the awesome, totally ruthless T-1000. And what of Arnie? Well, he's back (to coin a phrase) doing what he does best, namely using maximum muscle and minimum acting skill while picking up all the best lines (and his own personal Lear jet to boot), and even those attempts to present him as a sort of RoboCop to young John Connor never threaten to get in the way of the near non-stop action (whether it was always planned to make the T-101 one of the good guys this time around or if it was at Arnie's insistence as he tries to present a more caring persona doesn't really matter, what's important is that Cameron makes it work - and was that Arnie's Republican political affiliations showing in his response to John's assertion that "You just can't go around killing people"?). But the cream of the crop is undoubtedly Linda 'hard body' Hamilton, transformed into a more recognisable Cameron heroine and giving a really ballsy performance (so perhaps she acquired them along with those rippling Ripleyesque muscles?); fighting mad after being sprung from the asylum, she talks tough and acts tougher as she sets out on a one-woman crusade to avert the nuclear holocaust of her nightmares - strong motivation is needed to convince us that the character could undergo such a radical change and so we get to share her nightmare/premonition, the judgement day of the film's (sub) title, in the most stunning scene in this most stunning of films, ensuring that those of us still around in 1997 won't sleep too soundly on the eve of August 29th (and it's true that the audience laughter was noticeably absent during this scene).

So whatever it is you look for in your summer blockbuster, whether you want a better spfx show than *THE THING*, a better stunts spectacular than *MAD MAX 2*, or a bigger and better rollercoaster ride of a thriller than Cameron's own *ALIENS*, **TERMINATOR 2** has it all and is not to be missed on any account.

Sarah Connor has a line in the film about "making up history as we go along" and with this film James Cameron too is making history - be part of it.

MARK MURTON.

TERMINATOR 2 (1991)

Virgin Vision.

Directed Dario Argento.

91 mins.

At long (long) last Dario Argento's 1987 horror opus *OPERA* sees a British video release, albeit in a slightly truncated form. It's also undergone a (rather uninspired) title change, no doubt in an effort to establish that it is a horror movie and not another Carreras, Domingo, Pavarotti get together.

For once, though, I'll sing the praises of the censor who at least managed this time to keep their scissor snipping to a minimum, releasing the film with most of its gruesome set pieces intact. It could have been worse. Much worse. Surprisingly enough, the movie's most painful parts (for me anyway) have not been removed, these being the literally eye-popping scenes featuring agonising close-

ups of the heroine's bleeding eyes, forced open by tiny needles sellotaped underneath so that she misses nothing of the deaths of her friends who our typically Argentoesque killer brutally butchers in front of her. So intensely lachrymatory are these sequences that they make Malcolm McDowell's eye-clamping sessions in *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE* look like a typical day out at the opticians.

TERROR AT THE OPERA's rather unexceptional but often confusing plot is very reminiscent of both *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA* story and (oddly enough) Gordon Hessler's offbeat 1971 film *THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE*. As with most, if not all, Argento offerings, the murders and cinematography take precedence over anything else in the film. Storming out of La Scala opera house in a temper during rehearsals for Verdi's 'Macbeth', the production's volatile diva, Maria Cecova (Christina Gianchino), is run over by a passing car. Lady Macbeth, the part originally played by Cecova, is then offered to the apprehensive young understudy, Betty (Christina Marsillach), who finally accepts it after her agent, Myra (Daria Nicolodi), entreats her to do so. However, as Betty soon discovers, her debut performance is the least of her worries...

As a consequence of her first appearance, Betty becomes an overnight sensation and that evening she celebrates her success by going to bed with the opera's assistant director, Urbano (William McNamara). Then POW!, another man enters Betty's life: it is our masked murderer, complete with rope, sellotaped needles and knife, all set for subjecting Betty to a terrifying spectacle of his devotion to her. Betty can do nothing but gaze saucer-eyed in horror as Urbano is brutally knifed to death right there in front of her. (In the uncensored version, viewers are treated to loving close-ups of the killer's knife entering McNamara's mouth and slicing his wriggling tongue as well as shocking shots of a repeatedly painful palm stabbing.) Once set free by the mystery killer, Betty flees her apartment and reports the murder to the police. But this is only the beginning of the nightmarish chain of events which are to follow.

Following a succession of alternately suspenseful and shocking set-pieces which makes up the remainder of the film, Argento nearly blows the whole thing with a ludicrous climax - which is anything but climatic - offering a decidedly dodgy denouement which is about as satisfactorily explicative as you're not likely to get in an abbreviated version of a gory Italian horror pic. Fortunately, though, this doesn't impair the film's enjoyment too much since there are more than enough bravura sequences - most notably a stunning swooping camera scene in the opera house - to compensate for the film's few weak spots. **TERROR AT THE OPERA**, while not the most outstanding of the Italian maestro's output, is nevertheless a very entertaining and stylishly gruesome shocker which will undoubtedly thrill Argento admirers and horror aficionados alike.

PETER BENASSI.

TRANSFORMATIONS (1988)

CBS/Fox.

Directed by Jay Kamen.

77 mins.

Lone space-smuggler, Wolf (Rex Smith), has a pleasant birthday surprise when a girl appears in his cabin and proceeds to screw the living daylights out of him! However, she is not all she seems to be - when Wolf's eyes are closed she suddenly reveals her true reptilian self! Wolf's ship crashes onto a prison planet and he gets cared for by young Nurse Miranda (Lisa Langlois) - who also falls in love with him - and is informed that his ship is under repair.

He is told to keep to the hospital area but disobeys the command, leaves the virginal Miranda and picks up a girl in the tough local bar, but has weird visions and develops lumpy sores on his hand.

There is also a sub-plot to all this - some of the prisoners (led by Christopher DRACULA AD 1972 Neame) are planning an escape and are aiming to use Wolf's ship. Miranda also has a desire to get off the planet and asks Wolf to take her with him - only problem is he is rapidly deteriorating into something scary and is also into the not-so-friendly habit of murdering people!

The whole turn of events is 'explained' by a wisely priest (Patrick THE AVENGERS Macnee) who reveals the details of a plague and that purity is the only saviour - will true-love conquer the evil...?

On the whole this is pretty sub-standard stuff with some hokey man-in-a-suit type effects but there's some decent touches that let it rise above its tackiness - most notably,



T2 - Arnie gives it to 'em

the performance of the former Hammer-hopelul Christopher Neame as a slob and one gruesome scene that involves a set of intestines being ripped out through someones back!

A bit of mess really as it's not sure where to go - one minute luvvy-duvvy, the next unexpectedly nasty. Some scenes have TV movie written all over them with others easily rating its '18' certificate.

Look out for some amazing high-tek props in the form of those silly plastic beakers that have the straw wrapped around the outside, honest I'm not kidding!!

A strange affair, but when you realise that it's from Charlie Band's Empire Productions you understand why!!?

PAUL J. BROWN.

TWICE DEAD (1988)

RCA/Columbia.
Directed by Bert Dragin.
85 mins.

After a silly, phoney-looking, weird suicide scene at the beginning (set in the 1920's) this story zips forward to modern day with the Cates family moving into an old house (the very same building that witnessed the suicide) after inheriting it in a will.

Upon arrival the family are met by a gang of street kids who have been using the run-down house as their base and one of the gang members, Crip (Jonathan Chapin), takes a fancy to their daughter Robin (Jill Whitlow). The police move the gang on.

The Cates also have a son, Scott (Tom Breznahan), and on their first night in the house he hears strange noises and also discovers his late relation's personal effects - he was an actor and in the attic there is much in the way of props and other acting paraphernalia.

At school the two kids get into a scrape with the gang and manage to stitch them up. The gang vow to get even with them.

Meanwhile, Scott starts to spend a huge amount of time in the attic and as he digs deeper into the past more and more strange things start to happen - lights switching on and off, faces in mirrors, etc.

Late one night the gang decide to get their revenge - dressed in horror masks they kill the family cat and attempt to rape Robin, and would have done had it not of been for some strange forces waking up Scott by vibrating his bed in true EXORCIST fashion.

In the middle of all this mayhem we learn, in passing, that Scott is into special effects type work and that Robin is an expert sculptress!

Two months after the incident Mr and Mrs Cates have to go away which leaves the two kids all alone in the house. They decide that the only way to stop the gang's second coming is to prepare themselves and they put a plan into operation.

Sure enough, the gang return and find themselves in a hilarious mess with a multitude of rigged props and gags (check out the 'penisaurus' for starters!) but this only

succeeds in pissing them off.

They return yet again with murder on their minds but they haven't prepared themselves for the old actor's ghost...

A bit of a mystery film that has been marketed completely wrong - the press blurb on the sleeve would have you believe that it's something akin to **F/X MURDER BY ILLUSION**, but this is very misleading as Scott's effects work is only a minor part of the plot! It is, however, a fairly entertaining and bloody ghost shocker that gets the thumbs up from this reviewer because it does dare to be a little different. At first it is a little boring but this is soon forgotten near the end when the ghost starts to wreak bloody havoc - a head crushed under a dumbwaiter, a fat slob continually run down by his own motorcycle, a shot-gun in the mouth and, my favourite of the lot, a couple getting the ultimate 'jump' on a wet electric blanket!!

TWICE DEAD is worth a second look.

PAUL J. BROWN.

WITCH STORY (1989)

Medusa.
Directed by Alessandro Capone.
93 mins.

A witch burnt at the stake uses her driven-to-suicide daughter as a means of carrying out a curse that she imposed on her attackers' descendants.

This means a whole heap of trouble for a bunch of kids who have inherited her old house...

An enjoyable and fairly exciting excursion into the unknown that is chilling enough to be of interest to most horror buffs.

Churning out blood by the bucketful, it is also a very grisly affair, helped by a good dose of plain old-fashioned atmosphere and by the performances of a good cast of unknowns. The young players are marvellously supported by a wildly wacky over-the-top performance by Ian Bannen (sporting a freaky Wozzel Gummidge-type haircut).

As usual with Italian pics, as this is, there are one or two puzzling occurrences such as the appearance of a blood-crying priest and a handy chainsaw in the swimming pool, but, hey, what does it matter, **WITCH STORY** is recommended as a traditional exercise in horror. Just one question though - what the fuck is "October 31st"!!?

PAUL J. BROWN.

THE WITCHES (1989)

Warner Home Video.
Directed by Nicolas Roeg.
91 mins.

Perhaps Nicolas Roeg wasn't the most obvious choice to turn Roald Dahl's eponymously titled, popular children's book into a film (and 'Willy Wonka...' it ain't!) but the quality of the end product more than justifies this decision and should help to bring Roeg's talents to a much wider audience than usual.

After a leisurely but always enjoyable early section, in which nine-year old Luke (Jasen Fisher) learns from his Norwegian grandmother Helga (Mai Zetterling) how to spot witches and how best not to be spotted by them, the action moves to a seaside hotel run by child-hating Mr. Stringer (Rowan Atkinson) where, it appears, the AGM of the RSPCC is about to take place. But when Luke is forced to hide in the room of the meeting he finds himself in the middle of a gathering of all the witches of England in the presence of the Grand High Witch (Angelica Huston), who tells the assembled witches of her plans to turn the children of England into mice. Then, before Luke's astonished eyes, and with the aid of the immaculate spx of Jim Henson's Creature Workshop, a boy staying at the hotel duly becomes the first child to be turned into a mouse. Luke is discovered and also transformed and so the scene is set for a showdown between the witches, mice and Helga...

This is a fairly straight-forward telling of the story and so leaves little room for the usual touches of Roegery, but his direction proves equally assured with a traditional narrative and he demonstrates a good feel for comedy too.

The depth of talent behind the camera is matched by that in front of it, with fine comic turns from the likes of Rowan Atkinson, Bill Patterson and Brenda Blethyn, while the ever watchable Angelica Huston pulls out all the stops and clearly has a ball as the Grand High Witch (her Oscar nomination this year, officially for **THE GRIFTERS**, was surely in part for this performance too?); and it has to be said that young Jasen Fisher isn't overwhelmed by the impressive array of talent around him either.

Despite the PG rating and the links with Dahl and Henson, this has a much darker edge than most children's fare, offering a world where most of the adults barely tolerate the children around them, and while it's obviously tinged with sadness due to the subsequent deaths of Roald Dahl and Jim Henson it does stand as a fitting tribute to these two unique talents and provides splendid nasty fun for children of all ages.

MARK MURTON.

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